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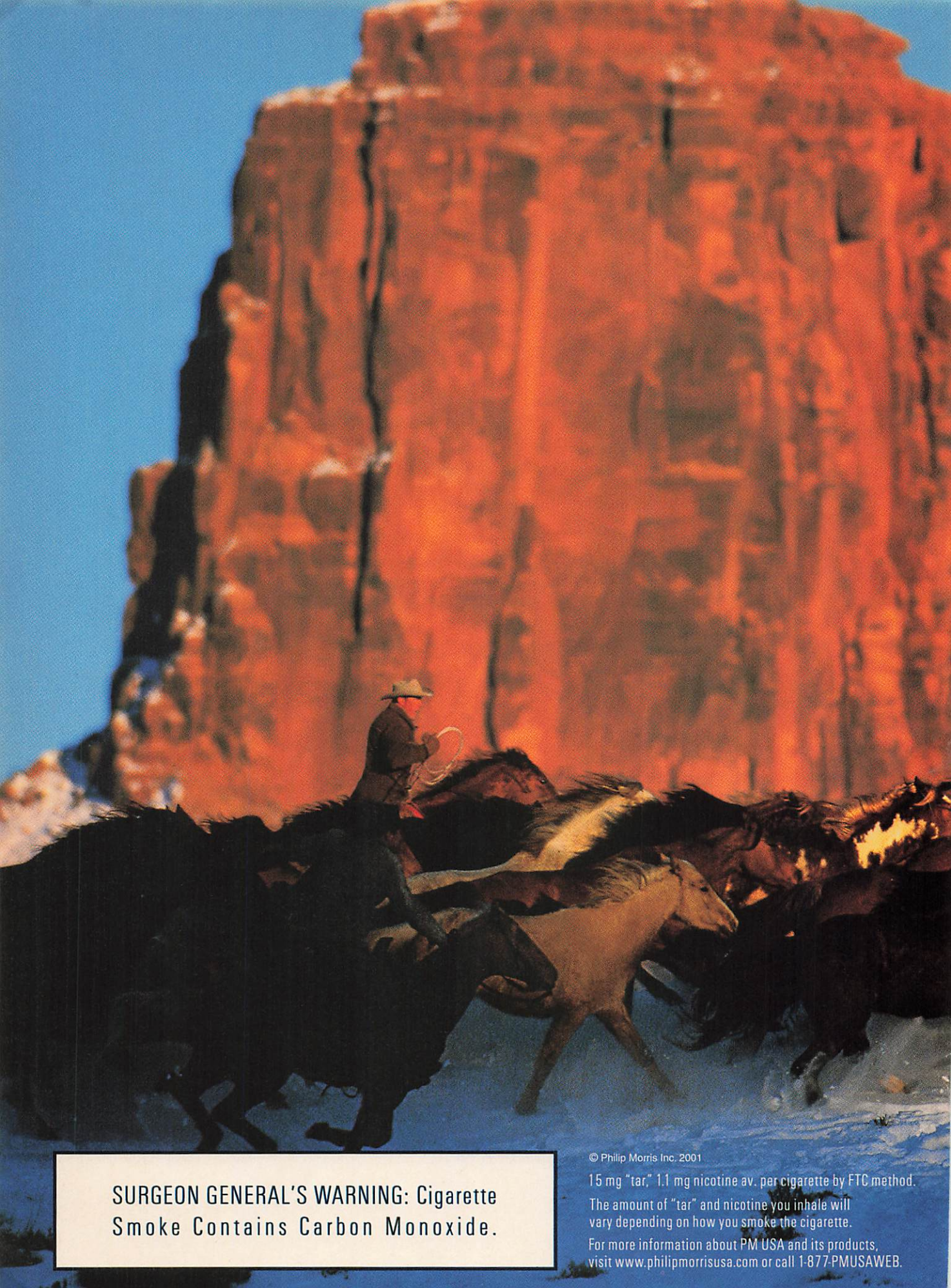

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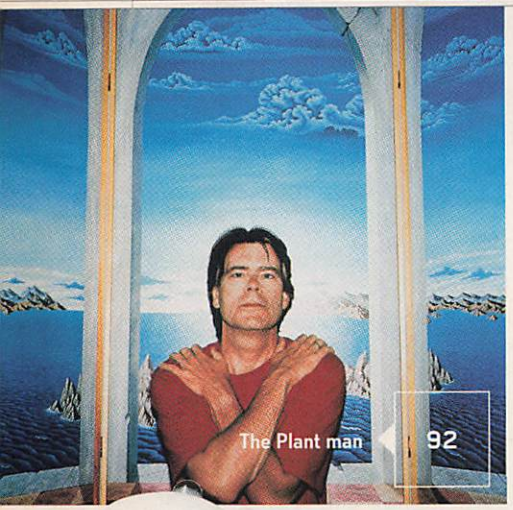

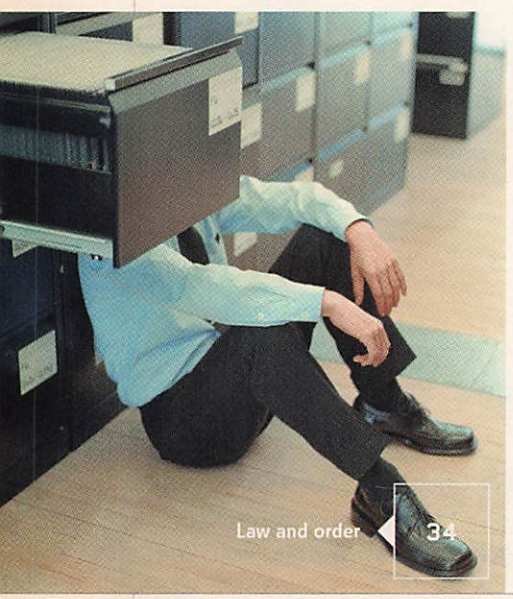

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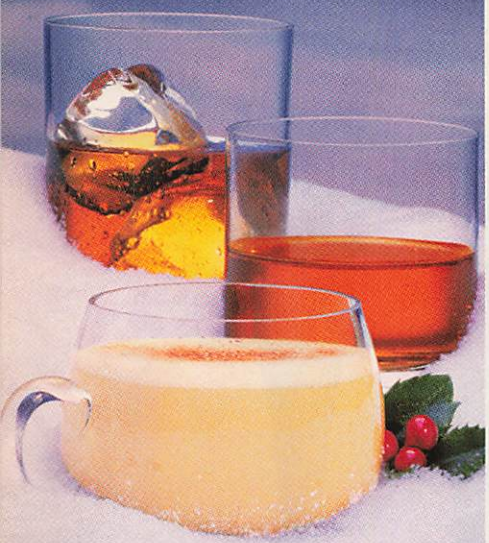

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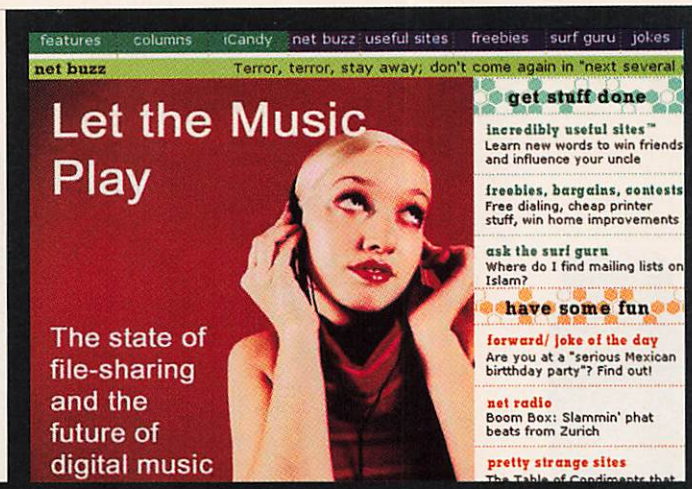

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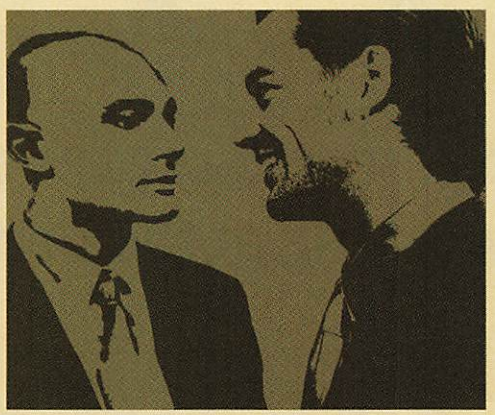
Note Worthy



Annotators have logged on in droves to help us explain Douglas Rushkoff's novel *Exit Strategy* to hypothetical 23rd-century readers. Visit **yil.com/rushkoff** to join the experiment. Here's a taste:

"Maybe it was the setting—that fresh Hamptons air[1]. Or the merlot[2]. But when Alec's[3] father offered me a position as a technology researcher[4] at M&L, somehow my job writing the back stories[5] for video games no longer felt like a high leverage point from which to alter the current of American culture."

[1] There may have been several Syndicates controlling distribution of the airborne elements. Laborers may have been forced to choose air from one or another of these Syndicates. "Hamptons" was likely one brand with a quality of air close to OxyCorp®. (UNIT808)

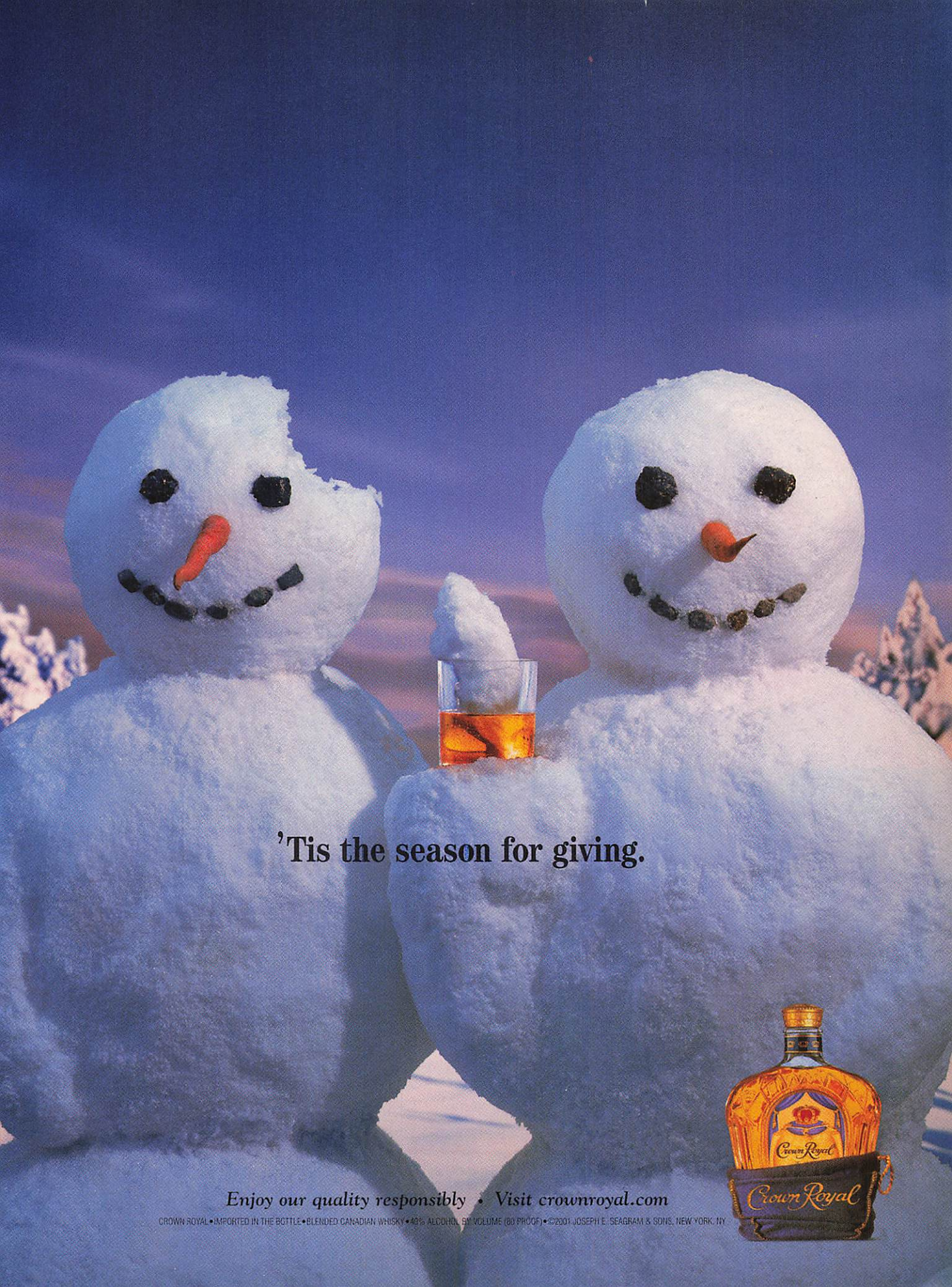
[2] An exotic seafood dish. Carved from the fins of marlin and grilled over mesquite embers after being marinated in a red wine produced in France. (MUSSEGROS)

[3] Speculation is that lower-class families named their firstborn male child after Alec Baldwin, the eldest of the entertaining Baldwin siblings. (CASE_MAKER)

[4] At this time, the sum knowledge (such as it was) of our race was still stored in so haphazard and clumsy a fashion that research was a notable skill, and hence could make for a career in itself. (ROB_R)

[5] Some information, or a story containing relevant information, about a novel or game. This form of communication became extinct with the advent of the neura-book in 2110 and then the synaptic web in 2157. (JEEBUS10)

TWO MEN: JOHNER/PHOTONICA



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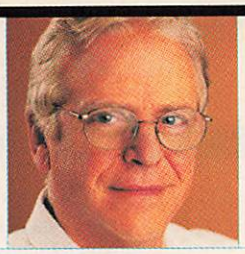

Lords of the Net

THIS MONTH'S COVER TOPICS—RELIGION ONLINE and the Net's take on *The Lord of the Rings*—are a fairly accurate reflection of the nation's dual mood. In the aftermath of September 11, and the bioterrorism fears, people are seeking both solace and escapism. The Net offers both.

Although the Net's glamour (music, movies, travel) and squalor (porn, scams, hate sites) are usually what gets talked about, religion has been a huge part of this new medium from the beginning. Before the terrorist attacks, two out of every 10 surfers went online daily seeking spiritual and religious information. In the days that followed, that number multiplied like loaves and fishes.

There's a dual mood in the nation. In the aftermath of September 11, and the bioterrorism fears, people are seeking both solace and escapism. The Internet offers both

And in addition to all the ways the Internet helps far-flung people congregate and communicate their faith, the phenomenon of electronic pluralism cannot be understated—we have a fresh new opportunity, maybe an unprecedented one, to foster understanding and tolerance among various faiths.

Contributing writer **LAURA FISHER KAISER** (who normally serves as our distinctly nonangelic E-venger consumer activist) spent the last six months researching religious sites, chatrooms, and bulletin boards for her "God Sitings" article. She reports back that what struck her most was the overwhelming amount of religious information available.

Says Kaiser, "This is quintessentially American—the freedom to 'try on' various religions and creeds. Many of these seekers end up rediscovering their original faith, but not before covering a lot of spiritual terrain, much of it virtually." Kaiser notes that the Net also took on new relevance after September 11, as users clogged bulletin boards, prayer circles, and information sites seeking to understand more about Islam, a religion that seems "foreign" to many Americans.

"Though a lot of hate messages were in evidence," says Kaiser, "many more people seemed to be looking for common ground. Because of instant connections and the breadth of information that's out there, the Net can instill deeper understanding, provide a safe—if volatile—haven for debate, and reassure people in moments of dread."

Novelist and contributing writer **DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF** explains in "Playing God" that the Internet also offers us something deeply transforming: a chance, through our own participation, to alter not only what we believe, but also the nature of what we believe in. It's a provocative set of ideas, and we expect them to spark some responses among our own congregation, over at **YIL.com/boards/religion**.

Though we periodically examine job-search sites in our Web Lab bake-offs (see the August '01 issue), we thought it an appropriate time to do a job interview of our own with **MARGARET RILEY DIKEL**, the coauthor of *The Guide to Internet Job Searching*. She tells our technology editor **DON WILLMOTT** that whether you're at the top of your game or in mid-career, knowing the subtleties of Internet job-searching is as valuable today as an up-to-date résumé.

But hey, let there be lightness, too. By the time this magazine is in your hands, and before the long-obsessed-over Lord-of-the-You-Know-What film is even out, you'll be up to your ears in hobbits and elves. Between senior editor **BILGE EBIRI**, contributing writer **ANGELA GUNN**, and a tribe of Tolkien fanatics, we've assembled the definitive guide to Middle-earth, Net-style.

Whatever your journeys, faithful readers, may your quests be peaceful.

X Barry Golson

BARRY GOLSON, EDITOR IN CHIEF

JAY GULLIXSON

MESSAGE CENTER

WHO SAYS PRINT ISN'T INTERACTIVE?
Letters to the editor: Write to yilmail@ziffdavis.com

MUSIC TO OUR EARS

Reading "Can't Stop the Music" [October '01, page 84] showed me that just because Napster is gone (at least for now) doesn't mean the digital music revolution is over. That article led me to some amazingly useful sites (I've got one minimized as I write this). Thanks for your help.

CLAY S.
@yahoo.com

THICK AS THIEVES

This is one of those "I never wrote in until I was angry" e-mails. I usually love your magazine, but I was disappointed with "Can't Stop the Music." The article's message seemed to be, "Isn't stealing on the Internet fun and easy?" As a national magazine, *Y-Life* should understand that by teaching readers how to steal, telling them where to steal, and approaching the theft with an "It's gonna happen anyway" attitude, you are accomplices to the crime. Don't you at least feel a little guilty?

DAVID LIEBERMAN
@awdsf.com

EASIER DONE THAN SAID

In "The Electric Tune-Raid Acid Test" [October '01, page 88] you noted some difficulties with using Audiogalaxy. Have I missed something? I've got 632 songs on my computer right now, and every last one was acquired from AG. Hard to use? Please.

ROB MARTENS
@optonline.net

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

I received your October magazine at a timely moment: Tuesday,

SITE GAG

"I SEE SOMEONE DIGITAL IN THE LEAD ROLE."

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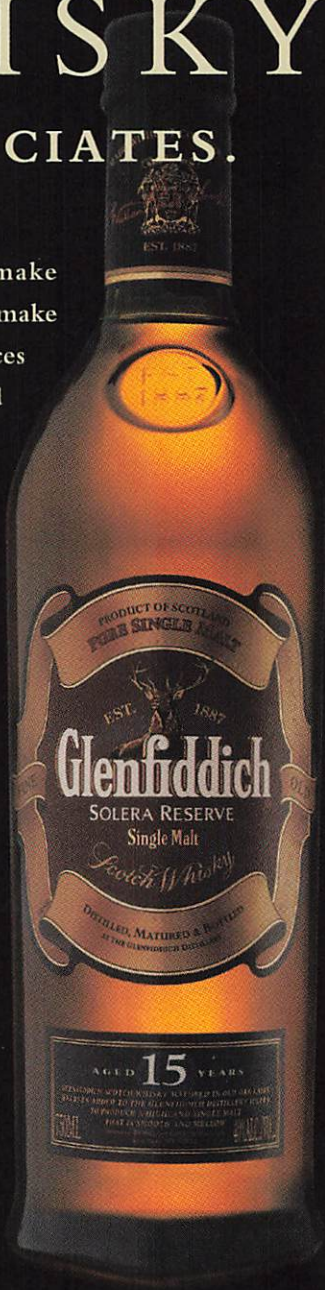

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September 11, the day that changed America and the world forever. As the media and the political community scrambled to place blame on someone, I needed to look no further than the cover of your magazine to discover the root of the crisis we experience today. The cover features a member of Aerosmith, a sacrilegious group. I read your article ["Aerosmith's Next Life," page 80] with horror. Words like *f---, orgasm,* and *heroin* were smeared all over the place.

We as a culture have been allowing these seductive words and images to rule our hearts and minds for years now. Those who call them "innocent" or "harmless" need to wake up to the fact that they are all part and parcel of a huge spiritual war.

PAM KANE
@aol.com

Come on, Mr. Falwell, there's no need to hide behind a pseudonym.... —Ed.

DOWNSIZE THIS

I respect the ambitious task of quantifying and qualifying the most wired colleges in America ["The Hot One Hundred Wired Colleges," October '01, page 100]. But as part of an institution that apparently is classified in the "small colleges" category, I am disappointed that the Top 10 small colleges didn't garner even a sidebar in the print version of *Y-Life.* My guess is that the Top 10 small colleges probably have higher overall scores than the bottom 50 most wired colleges.

In the future, I suggest you print the Top 10 most wired small colleges and Top 10 most wired two-year schools. Let's be fair to the little guys who recognize the importance of being wired.

ANDREW M. SVEC
Director of Communications
University of Minnesota, Crookston
@mail.crk.umn.edu

It's certainly true that many small liberal arts schools have made great strides in integrating technology into campus life, and we continue to recognize their achievements on our Web site. For more, see **[wiredcolleges.com]**. *—Ed.*

COLLEGE CHEER

Your 100 most wired colleges article is filled with incredibly useful information, presented beautifully. Thank you for all that research and the compilation of data.

GLENN ISAACSON
@worldnet.att.net

TO SEND OR NOT TO SEND

Roger Ebert's "Please Don't Forward This Column" [October '01, page 68], on e-mail etiquette, was enlightening. Although I follow most of the advice provided, I would like to break the title rule: I want to forward Ebert's piece to some friends!

BRUCE HOFFMAN
@cigna.com

BACK IN *MY* DAY...

I enjoyed Angela Gunn's "Where We Are Now" [September '01, page 76]. She reminded me of the reason I became interested in computers and the Internet in the first place: They were different from television. At that time, bulletin boards had no ads and getting on was about getting together with people. I hope that one day the ad money will dry up, and along with it, all of the eye-candy content that has cluttered up the Net. Remember why those early days were so special? Because those who weren't interested in drivel left their TVs for the secret world of being online. Thanks again for a wonderful reminder.

PAUL VOTA SR.
@ec.rr.com

YIL.COMMENTS

Our November issue addressed the Internet's role in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Meanwhile, visitors to yil.com/boards shared their own thoughts.

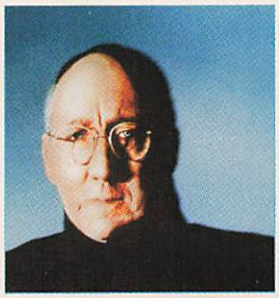
1) As a Muslim I'm very disappointed by bin Laden declaring war on the Western world. Muslim terrorists out there just use the word "jihad" for their actions, thinking that their actions are sacred by Islamic views. I must say that their actions and their beliefs are wrong. May Allah help us all.

2) I do not group all Muslims as terrorists. During my stay in Libya, I came in contact with Muslims whom I considered friends, and we shared many of the same views. Left alone, many of us want similar things in life. However, there are some who utilize the education of the youth to inflict hatred and bitterness. We as a free people condemn such education.

3) Okay, so elements in the Arab world finally succeeded in lashing out at America. Honestly, folks, who is surprised here? Not long ago, we frequently heard the same old news of a couple more suicide bombings in Israel and the same weary Israeli response of careful reprisals. How many of us merely thought, "What is wrong with those people over there?" And many groaned, "Why can't Israel stop reacting with violence? How can Israel assassinate the people who planned the attacks? Civilized people—or at least we in the U.S.—don't do such things."

Well, now it is "civilized." It's a funny thing how reality, language, and truth change so quickly in America.

You talkin' to us? We hope so. Write to yilmail@ziffdavis.com.



OUR FAVORITE NOISEMAKERS Clockwise, from left: Aerosmith, Radiohead, Pete Townshend, the Smashing Pumpkins, Prince

The 2001 Online Music Awards

SOMETIMES, LIFE INTERVENES. THE CEREMONY FOR THE Fourth Annual Yahoo! Internet Life Online Music Awards, scheduled for September 20 in New York City's Hammerstein Ballroom, had to be canceled owing to the tragic events of September 11. The show was to have included performances by Aerosmith, American Hi-Fi, Ludacris, Widespread Panic, and 2001 Online Pioneer Pete Townshend. In lieu of our annual bash, we announced the winners, as determined by our Online Music Academy, at **yilmusicawards.com**. Here's who rocked the online world this year.

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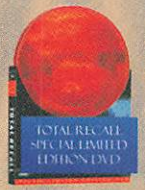

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People, Places, and Trends on the Net >>> Edited by Ron Bel Bruno

DECEMBER 2001

MILES MARSHAL

MAN OF ACTION (FIGURES)

It's about time Seth Green got on the Web. Given his snarky sensibility—tailor-made for the medium—you have to wonder why it didn't happen sooner. Still, better late than never: The acerbic star of film (*Austin Powers, Rat Race*) and television (*Family Guy, Greg the Bunny*) added another credit to his lengthy résumé this October with the debut of his animated series *Sweet J Presents* on Sony's **Screenblast [screenblast.com]**. Cocreated with pal Matt Senreich—formerly the editor of *ToyFare* magazine, to which Green once contributed a column—the show takes potshots at celebrities both famous and forgotten using an army of hard-to-find action figures from the duo's own extensive collections.

The collaboration began when Green (rendered in plastic, above at right), with an appearance on *Late Night With Conan O'Brien* looming, decided to poke fun at the gangly talk-

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Continued from page 27

show host by producing what would become *Sweet J*'s pilot. In the original short, O'Brien—portrayed by a customized Conan action figure (at left in photo)—tracks down his not-so-secret lust object, a Britney Spears doll, at a celebrity convention. Dozens of other pop culture fixtures, from Ben Stiller to Jar Jar Binks to the Dukes of Hazzard, get mocked along the way.

Okay, we know what you're going to say: "Oh, great, more slickly animated shows on the Web with some big corporate Hollywood tie-in." But actually, despite a healthy budget and an initial 12-episode order, *Sweet J* shuns fancier animation in favor of a stop-motion technique that gives it an old-school, Rankin/Bass *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* feel.

"Is it as much of a pain as it looks?" Green asks. "Yes. It is unbelievably time-consuming, but we hired a crew that works faster than a Nike sweatshop. They produced animation at an inhuman rate." We assume Green was complimenting his partners at the indie production company Shadow Machine when he said this.

But the old-fashioned style of animation isn't the only thing that distinguishes *Sweet J* from its predecessors. The shows are also incredibly irreverent, and Green's brand of satire is merciless. Still, the enfant terrible doesn't seem fazed. Though he may be biting the hand that feeds him, Green says he doesn't expect any backlash from the showbiz icons he's satirizing in *Sweet J*.

"When someone is out there in the public spotlight, they become a lightning rod for criticism," Green explains. "It's not necessarily fair, but they become a target. If you have a toy, you are on our radar. No one is safe, not even ourselves. Anybody who might be offended is taking themselves too seriously." Besides, who could possibly be threatened by a 27-year-old who still plays with toys? "Yeah," he whimpers. "I know."

DAVE ITZKOFF

Net Briefs

MIDDLE EAST MEETS WEST The AlJazeera.net news site reports brisk traffic from English-speaking surfers.

MUSIC UNDER SIEGE

Earlier this year, a triumvirate of record companies settled out of court with Napster. Now a considerably larger alliance of 30 media companies is suing the file-sharing systems MusicCity.com, Grokster, and Kazaa. These services "look like Napster, smell like Napster, and, from a consumer perspective, operate just like Napster," says Matt Oppenheim, senior vice president of the Recording Industry Association of America. Meanwhile, file-swapping advocates criticized the RIAA for its plan to quash downloads of copyrighted files with automated software that could down servers by sending them continual file requests. Such a system, said one congressional staffer, runs counter to Net virus-control efforts.

BITS CAPTURED

Thanks to noted Web archivist Brewster Kahle, the Library of Congress, and a group of volunteers, 3,800 Web sites relating to the incidents of September 11 have been preserved and posted for posterity at **September11.archive.org**. Kahle sees this effort—which comprises more than 60 million pages of words and images—as not only a digital historical reference but also a way to help those who are now coping with this tragedy to comprehend, at their own pace, what has happened.

'THIS IS *NOT* CNN'

As the U.S. launched its offensive in Afghanistan, surfers in the West seeking alternative opinions on the conflict consulted **AlJazeera.net**, the Web operation of the leading pan-Arabic television network. The Arabic-language site claims that 40 percent of its traffic during that time was drawn from surfers who don't speak Arabic; many used an Arabic-English translator at **Ajeeb.com**. After the onset of the war, daily traffic to the site increased fivefold, to more than 10 million hits daily.

FAQs ON BIOTERRORISM

Now that once-rare diseases have become weapons of warfare, it's critical to know the latest info. The Centers for Disease Control's **CDC: Public Health Emergency Preparedness & Response [www.bt.cdc.gov]** sorts fact from fiction while updating surfers on government readiness plans in place for different attack scenarios. The site also includes a profile of the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile's vaccine supply, which has ramped up its anthrax and smallpox treatment operations. A clickable U.S. map guides you to the emergency preparedness plans for selected states and cities.

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AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

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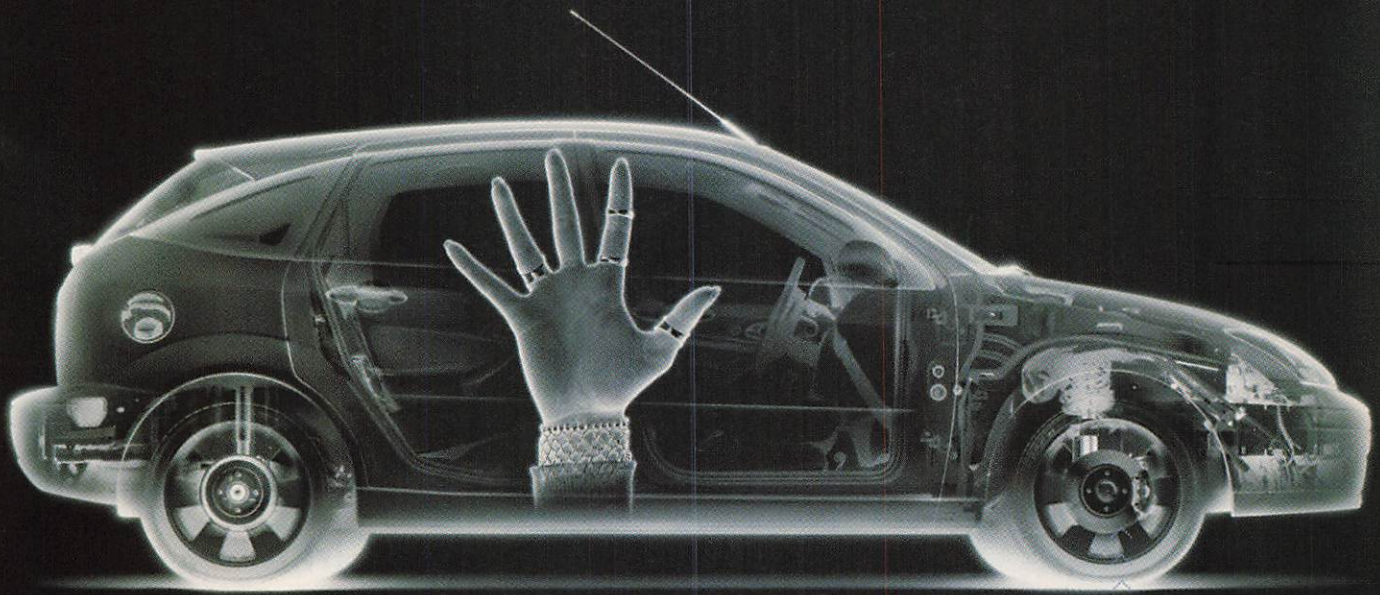
ALL-NEW · FORD · FOCUS · ZX5 16" ALLOY WHEELS, 2.0L 16-VALVE ZETEC ENGINE, FOG LAMPS, 6-DISC IN-DASH CD CHANGER, AIR CONDITIONING, POWER WINDOWS/DOOR LOCKS/OUTSIDE MIRRORS, REMOTE KEYLESS ENTRY, LEATHER-WRAPPED STEERING WHEEL, 60/40 SPLIT/FOLD REAR SEAT, HEIGHT-ADJUSTABLE DRIVER'S SEAT, THE MOST PASSENGER ROOM IN ITS CLASS AND A NO-CHARGE 5-YEAR/100,000-MILE POWERTRAIN EXTENDED SERVICE PLAN*



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Click! around the net

Save! Delete!

Smart Moves... ...Dubious Deeds

KILL BUGS DEAD

The Net is crawling with Web bugs, those sinister snippets of code and invisible image files that track your travels online. They can even turn up in your e-mail. But thanks to the Privacy Foundation's free **Bugnosis [bugnosis.org]** Web bug detector, you can find and remove them. The program works on PCs running Explorer 5.*x* or later.

FUNNY URL

With such stories as "God Angrily Clarifies 'Don't Kill' Rule," **The Onion [theonion.com]** made us laugh in spite of ourselves after September 11. The spoofy site's daring satire marked the first departure from the somber accounts and heart-wrenching testimonials reported everywhere else.

SPICK-AND-SPAM

Hotmail's new, industrial-strength Junk Mail Filter offers three levels of anti-spam power; all are high-octane compared with similar services from Yahoo! and AOL.

CODE RED

After September 11, the Net faced a spate of new virus attacks. The W32.Vote and WTC.exe worms were particularly foul bits of code that spread online and destroyed PC users' computer files; they were attached to bogus e-mails promoting peace between the U.S. and Muslim nations.

MOUSE TRAP?

M.I.T. has developed a way to record the mouse movements made on a Web page. By comparing the mouse trails of thousands of surfers, the system, called Cheese, will tell online stores what products you looked at, even if you didn't buy any.

YA-WHO?

Aussie actor and director Yahoo Serious, known for such films as *Young Einstein*, continues to fight Web portal Yahoo! in court, claiming the site's name is easily confused with his own. Does the estate of Jonathan Swift have anything to say about all of this?

"Ten years from now, our fear is that the American public will look back to this legislation and say, 'This is where we crossed the line to a surveillance society'"

LAURA W. MURPHY, DIRECTOR OF THE ACLU'S WASHINGTON, D.C., NATIONAL OFFICE, REGARDING ANTITERRORISM LEGISLATION THAT WOULD GIVE THE CIA CARTE BLANCHE TO WIRETAP TELEPHONE AND INTERNET COMMUNICATIONS

Top of the Net

DOWNLOADS

ZDNet Top five downloads

1 YAHOO! MESSENGER
2 AMERICAN FLAG SCREENSAVER
3 DOWNLOAD ACCELERATOR
4 FLASHGET
5 W32.NIMDA.A@MM (Nimda removal tool)

Rankings reflect downloads for the week ending 9/27/01.

MOVIES

Top five DVDs purchased by members of the U.S. House of Representatives at Amazon.com

1 GLADIATOR
2 BRAVEHEART
3 CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON
4 THE SOPRANOS—THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON
5 CASABLANCA

Rankings reflect purchases for the week ending 9/8/01.

GAMES

Top five games among women at Switchouse [switchouse.com]

1 CRAZY TAXI (DREAMCAST)
2 SHENMUE (DREAMCAST)
3 THE SIMS (WIN95)
4 FINAL FANTASY TACTICS (PLAYSTATION)
5 FINAL FANTASY VIII (PLAYSTATION)

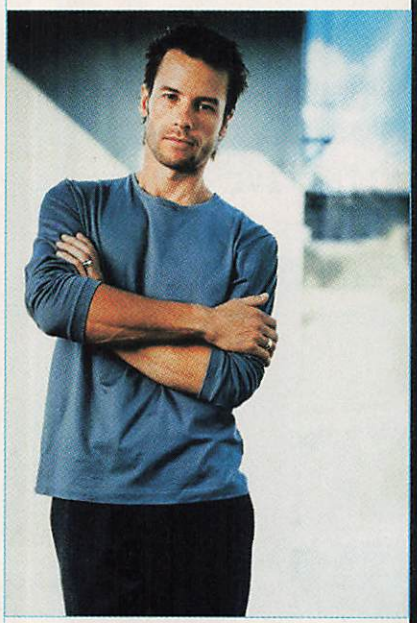
Rankings reflect July and August 2001 swaps and purchases.

netobsessions

The Guy

GUY PEARCE

In February, the Aussie actor will fast-forward 800,000 years in the big-screen version of H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine*. Of course, the star of *Memento* and *L.A. Confidential* already has plenty of fans in the here and now. Start @ **Guy Pearce Site [aussieguy.com]**



TIM BAUER/HEAD PRESS/RETNA

The Thing

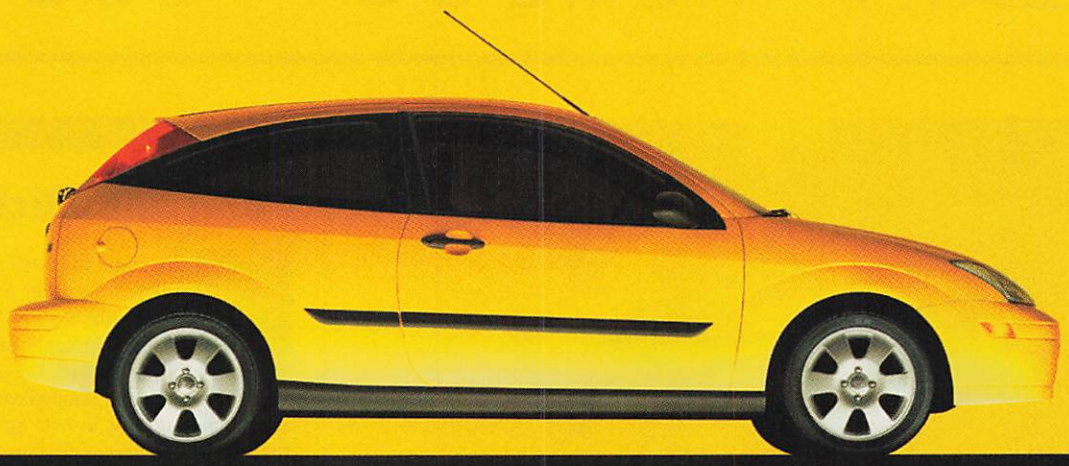
DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

Duke Nukem is still kicking ass and chewing bubble gum—and he's all out of gum. The much-anticipated fourth installment of the first-person shooter is to be released (cross your fingers, folks) for the PC this winter. Get your twitching thumbs started @ **Duke Nukem Forever [3drealms.com/games.html]**

The Girl

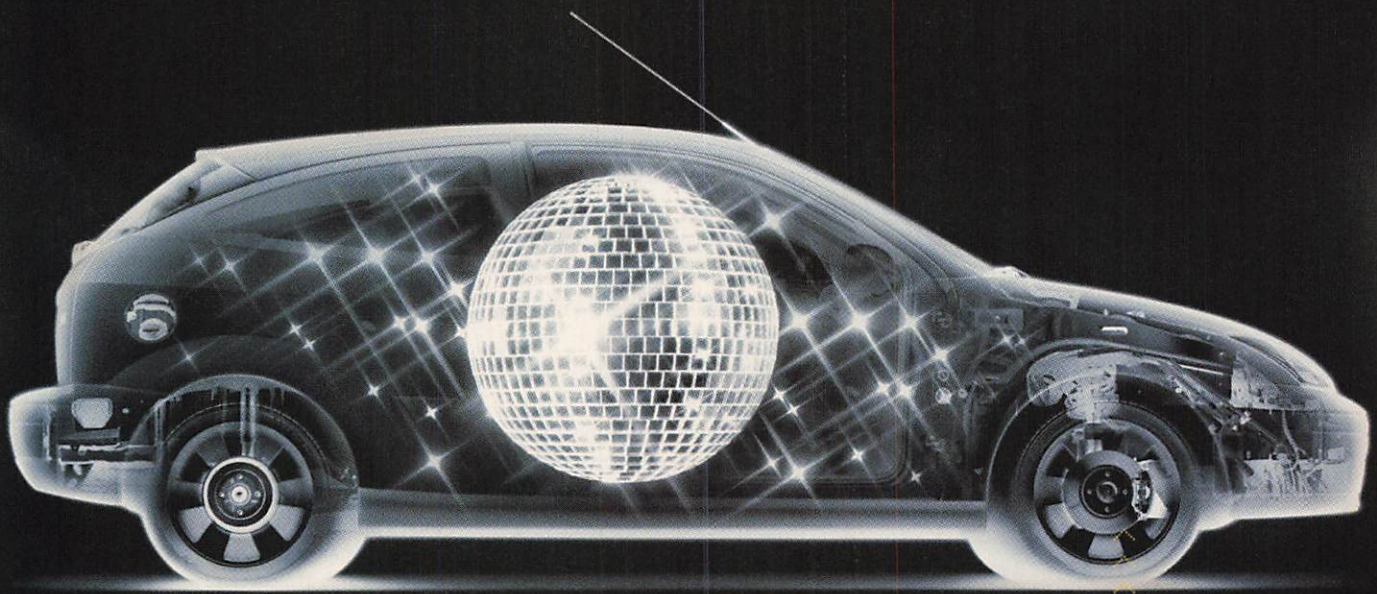
JULIA STILES

In late summer, the actress starred in *O*, a contemporary take on Shakespeare's *Othello*. Her next film, opposite Matt Damon, is based on Robert Ludlum's *The Bourne Identity*. Maybe her six fan sites should include reading lists. Start @ **Julia Stiles Online [geocities.com/julia_stiles_online/main.html]**



GET YOUR GROOVE ON.

2002 · FORD · FOCUS · ZX3 16" ALLOY WHEELS, 2.0L 16-VALVE ZETEC ENGINE, FOG LAMPS, AM/FM STEREO W/CD PLAYER, AIR CONDITIONING, LEATHER-WRAPPED STEERING WHEEL, 60/40 SPLIT/FOLD REAR SEAT, HEIGHT-ADJUSTABLE DRIVER'S SEAT, THE MOST INTERIOR ROOM IN ITS CLASS AND A NO-CHARGE 5-YEAR/100,000-MILE POWERTRAIN EXTENDED SERVICE PLAN.*



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LET THE NET DO IT BETTER

LEGAL AID

GOT A QUESTION FOR AN ATTORNEY? DO SOME RESEARCH BEFORE YOU ASK

Lawyers charge by the minute, so if it's just facts and legal precedent that you're looking into, it makes sense to run a quick, free search rather than hiring a professional right away. Whether you're disputing a traffic ticket or preparing a will, there are a host of law-related sites that can help you sort through potentially complicated legal issues and avoid problems later on. In addition to basic explanations of terminology, you'll find detailed articles about steps to take during disputes or negotiations. If you happen to hit a snag, most of the sites offer legal counseling for significantly less than what you'd have to pay Ally McBeal. If, once you have gathered all the relevant info, it's time for some professional representation, these sites can also connect you with living, breathing lawyers to contact for hire. **JEREMY CAPLAN**

SITE	COST OF LEGAL COUNSEL	NUMBER OF LEGAL FORMS AVAILABLE	BONUS FEATURES
@LAWGURU.COM (LAWGURU.COM)	About $13/month (varies by state)	200+	35,000+ legal questions and answers; law chat; Weird & Dumb Laws section
FINDLAW (FINDLAW.COM)	$39.95* per session	8,000+	LawCrawler law-site search engine; customizable portal page
NOLO (NOLO.COM)	$39.95* per session	90+	Free downloadable legal guides; extensive immigration law information
ABA NETWORK: FIND LEGAL HELP (FINDLEGALHELP.ORG)	$0–30 per session	NA	Free telephone consultation for injury cases; online directory of pro bono resources across the country
INTERNET LEGAL RESOURCE GUIDE (ILRG.COM)	N/A	80+	Categorizes 4,000+ legal sites; links to major law schools and law school directories

*Through Law Express (lawexpress.com)

netsavers

Point and Click

SAVE MONEY

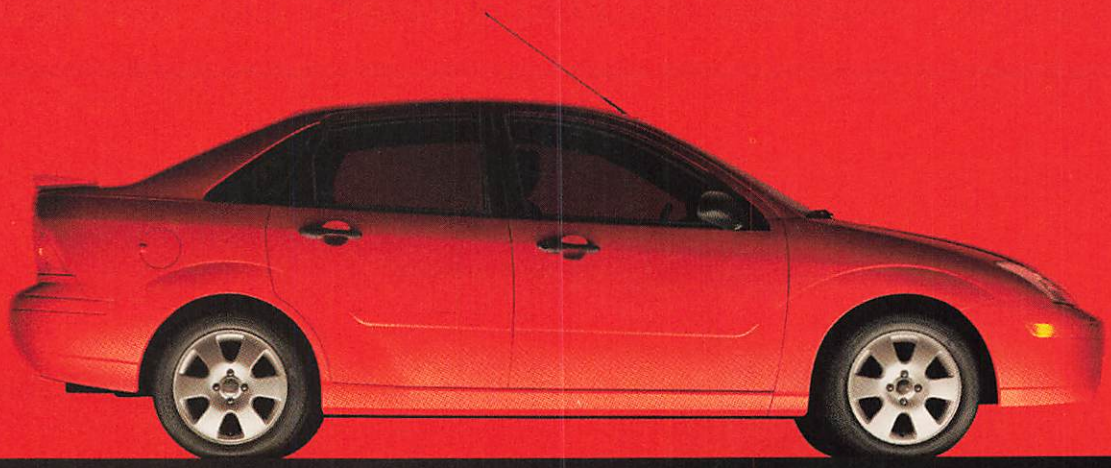
Welcome to couch potato heaven. To enter a world where absolutely everything can be controlled from the comfort of your black Naugahyde La-Z-Boy, visit **RemoteCentral.com**. The site's main purpose: to help get rid of the four, five, or six remotes littering the coffee table and replace them with a single, magical, universal remote. Of course, with dozens of models from which to choose—some look like oversize Palms, with large color screens and price tags that can hover close to $1,000—you may not know where to start shopping. Turn to the Clicker Picker, which guides you through a detailed list of criteria that will help you buy the perfect model.

Revive Dead Data

SAVE TIME

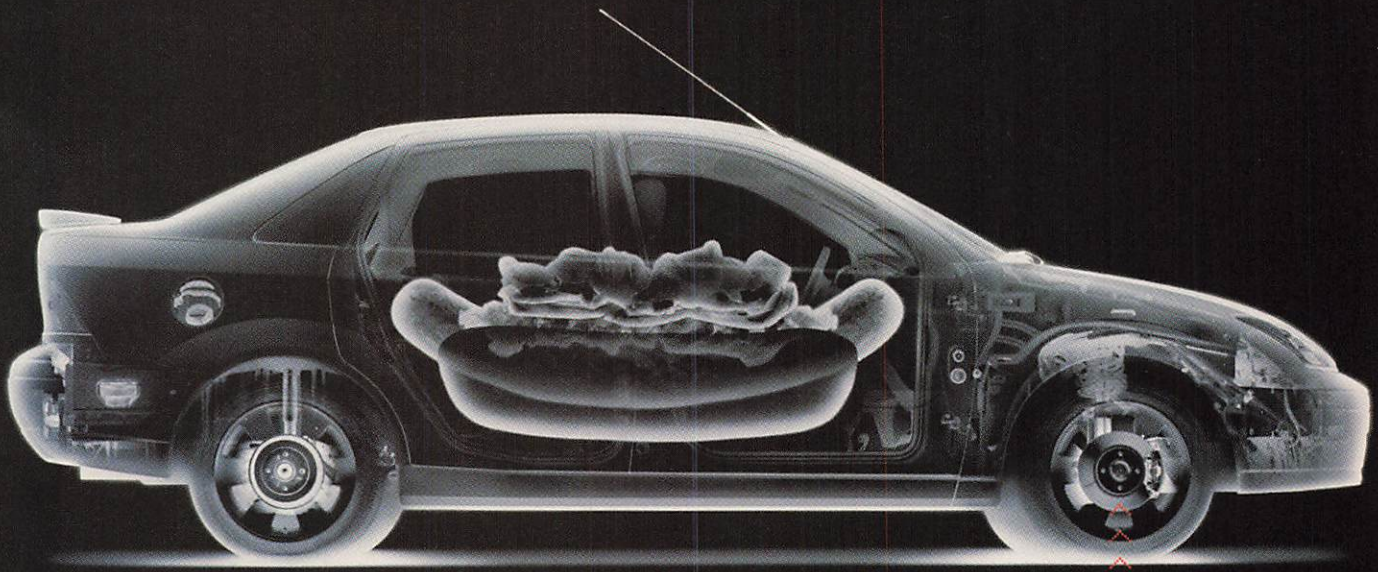
Sting, Sean Connery, Jimmy Buffett, and the executive producer of *The Simpsons* have something in common: They all managed to destroy their e-data—and were in danger of losing their files forever—until they sought help at **DriveSavers Data Recovery (drivesavers.com)**. At least that's how the data recovery company's dramatic testimonials page tells it. No matter what's befallen your computer—flood, fire, sledgehammer attack—DriveSavers will take a stab at recovering what you've lost. They'll operate on CD-ROMs, floppies, Zip and Jaz drives, even digital-camera memory cards. It's amazing what can be restored. Just call the company, relate your sob story, get an estimate, and send off the damaged goods. Turnaround time can be as fast as a single business day. This is one service that can save your sanity. **DON WILLMOTT**

FILING CABINET: ROBERT DALY/GETTYONE; REMOTE: JAMES McENTEE/GETTYONE



ONE WITH EVERYTHING.

2002 · FORD · FOCUS · ZTS 16" ALLOY WHEELS, 2.0L 16-VALVE ZETEC ENGINE, REAR SPOILER, FOG LAMPS, AM/FM STEREO W/CD PLAYER, AIR CONDITIONING, POWER WINDOWS/DOOR LOCKS/OUTSIDE MIRRORS, REMOTE KEYLESS ENTRY, LEATHER-WRAPPED STEERING WHEEL, 60/40 SPLIT/FOLD REAR SEAT, HEIGHT-ADJUSTABLE DRIVER'S SEAT, THE MOST INTERIOR ROOM IN ITS CLASS AND A NO-CHARGE 5-YEAR/100,000-MILE POWERTRAIN EXTENDED SERVICE PLAN.*



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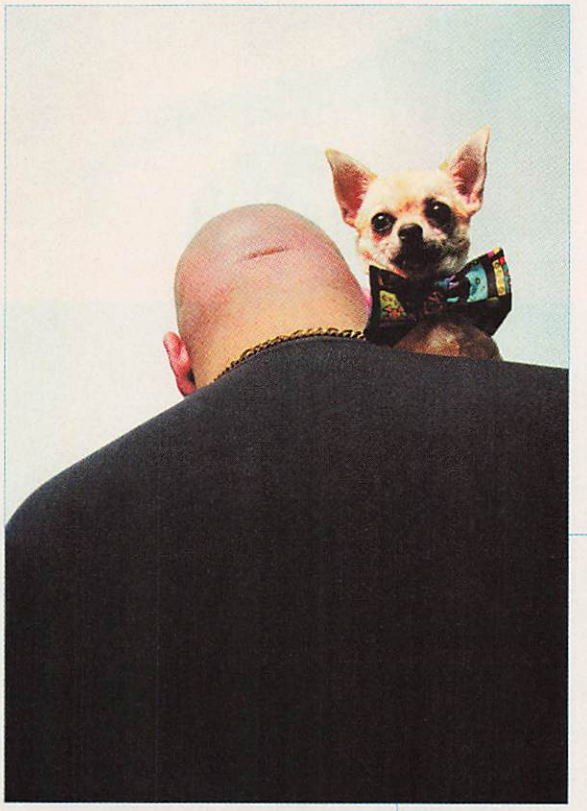
Click! ▸ incredibly useful sites™

THIS MONTH'S MOST PRACTICAL DESTINATIONS BY JEREMY CAPLAN



Find a Pet

When Fido goes missing, it can be a painful experience for a distraught owner. At the **PetShelter Network [petshelter.org]**, people who've lost or found a pet—and those offering or seeking one for adoption—can connect. Hundreds of shelters across the country post information about pets on the site, and it's become an excellent clearinghouse for lost and found cats and dogs.

Get Smart

Whatever your interest, there's somewhere you can learn about it offline. Finding the classes, however, could prove to be a challenge. Whether it's a course in Kentucky on making fried chicken, or one in Hollywood on filmmaking, **TakeAclass.com** will provide a list of local courses. Just enter your city and state and the subject you want to study. For most classes, you'll get the syllabus and cost, along with contact information so you can sign up. There's professional and tech training, too. Live in a remote area? You can also elect to search for distance-learning courses.

Compare Countries

It's time to decide between France and Thailand for that next vacation. **Your Nation [www.your-nation.com]** compares any two countries on nearly 100 demographic and statistical measures. The number of telephones per capita, the population's age range or gender ratio, or the airport runway length—you'll find it all here, along with the top and bottom five countries in any category. Your Nation is particularly helpful for business or school research because it generates great-looking charts for instant comparisons.

Fight the Power

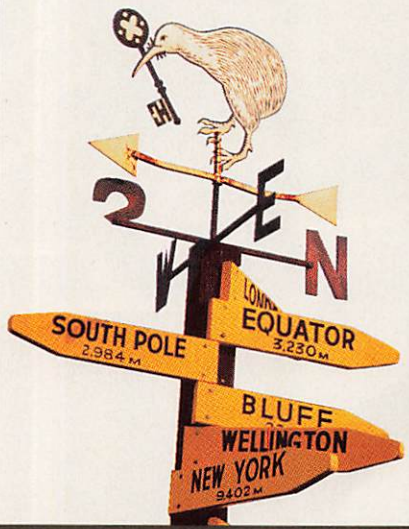
Does the role that money plays in American politics make you angry? Are you upset by the oppression in Tibet you read about? Do you feel that circus bears are mistreated? Gather signatures for your cause and drum up support at **ThePetitionSite.com** by filling in a quick form. If you're not ready to jump out ahead of the pack, you can sign one of the more than 100 petitions already posted at the site. Show that you care about protecting our national forests, or demand a U2 musical tour of Australia. Whatever you believe in, make your voice heard here.

Postdate Your E-Mail

Hmm, what if it were possible to delay the transmission of e-mail messages? Well, it *is* possible, and the reasons for doing so are limited only by your sneaky imagination. Try out the concept at **EmailAlibi.com**. Fool people into thinking you're working while you take a long lunch, make your girlfriend think you're home at the computer when you're out with the boys...you get the idea.

Measure Distance

Quick: How far is Jakarta from Chicago? If you answered 9,818 miles, you're probably using **Indo.com: How Far Is It [indo.com/distance]**. Pick any two places on earth and find out how far apart they are. If you're traveling between U.S. cities, you can also generate turn-by-turn driving directions and calculate an estimate of how long the trip will take, courtesy of MapBlast.



MAN & DOG: TIM FLACH/GETTYONE; ROAD SIGN: JAMES L. AMOS/CORBIS

ALL KINDS OF SPACE.

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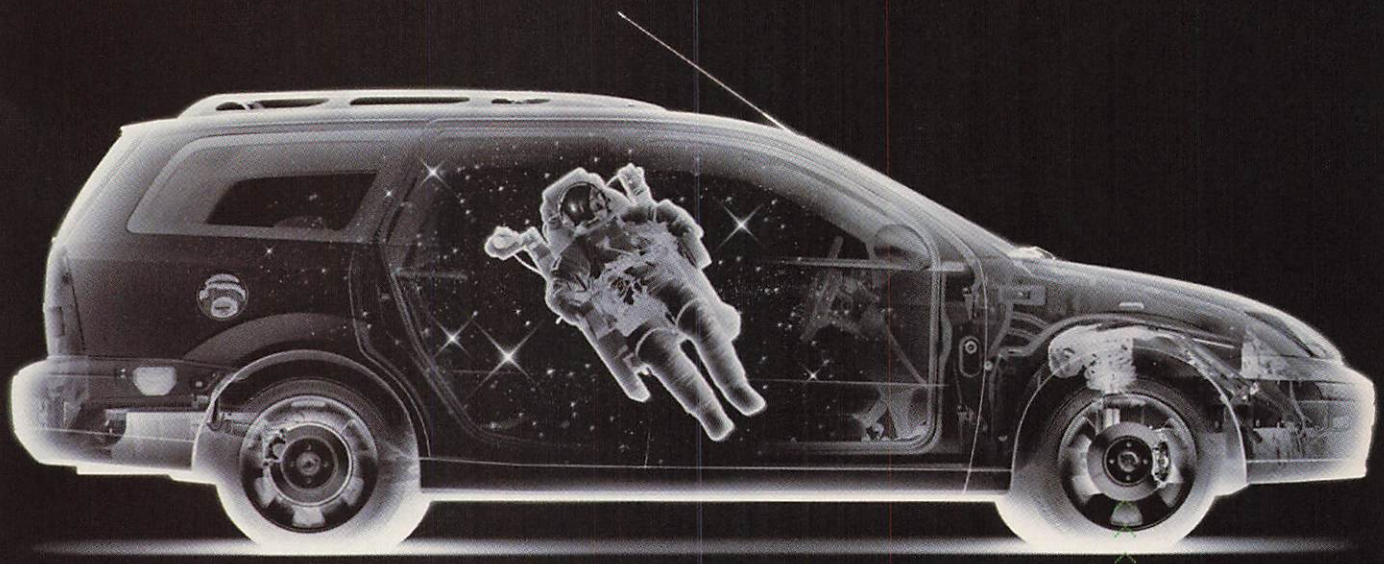

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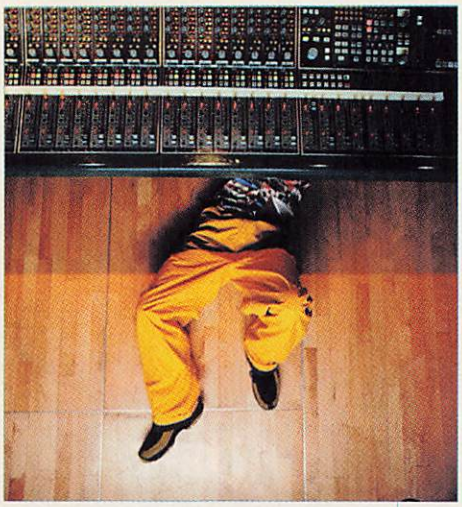

Repair Anything

The next time a favorite appliance breaks down, don't kick it, and don't spend $200 to get a technician to make a house call. Instead, visit **RepairClinic.com** for detailed troubleshooting and tips on fixing 16 types of appliances, from refrigerators and stoves to dishwashers and washing machines. Because a missing or broken part sometimes fouls up a whole machine, the site features a PartDetective. Figure out which gizmo is needed, and PartDetective will help you order it.

Learn Obscure Lingo

When it comes to technical terms, conventional dictionaries are often useless. The next time you stumble upon an unfamiliar word that might pertain only to a highly specialized branch of dentistry (hey—it happens), look it up at **The Glossarist [glossarist.com]**. This searchable collection of specialized glossaries reveals that the crown your dentist charged you for is a porcelain or gold cover for a damaged tooth, not a royal headpiece. Okay, that was an easy one, but what about *overjet*? Whether the word in question is a musical, medical, military, or legal expression (what the heck does *actus reus* mean?), the site links to one of several thousand glossaries to give you a detailed definition of the word or concept.

Master a Sport

You're still throwing gutter balls. Your golf handicap is sky-high. Visit **SportsID.com**, which hosts free videos of star athletes demonstrating techniques for more than 50 sports ranging from football and bodysurfing to rock climbing, road cycling, and rugby. Using basic video software (available free online), try downloading and watching the short clips to learn the skills needed to excel at your sport of choice. Bill Walton as your basketball coach? That's one way to improve your foul shots.

...and downloads

ARRANGE YOUR PHOTOS

What's great about digital photos is that they can be organized as the data they are—but that's also their greatest liability. Is DX000294.jpg a photo from the family reunion? Or is it that embarrassing shot your buddies took of you in Vegas? **Digital Photo Librarian [oneilsoftware.com]** humanizes the process by setting up a library of clearly named photos that you can arrange into albums with a minimum of fuss. Take an album and turn it into a screen saver. Create photo CD-ROMs to send to relatives. Build pages of photos to add to your Web site. The software makes it a snap. *Free to try, $25 to buy.*

TRACK WEATHER 24/7

Amateur meteorologists and Weather Channel watchers can get a little more obsessive with AWS's **WeatherBug [weatherbug.com]**, which tells you quite a bit more about the current conditions than any local newscast can deliver in two minutes. The program can be as unobtrusive as a temperature reading next to your on-screen clock, but when it starts to chirp, take note: A storm is on the way. *Free.*

MANAGE MP3S WITH STYLE

So this is how the other half keeps track of their MP3 files. If gorgeous, high-end Bang & Olufsen audio gear is beyond your means, you can at least get a taste of the luxe lifestyle by downloading B&O's **BeoPlayer [beoplayer.com]**. A well-equipped MP3 manager, it includes all the tools you need to access, sort, categorize, and play your music and create custom playlists, while links to the Net deliver album information and lyrics. Chances are that the interface will eventually be built in to B&O's products. *Free.* **DON WILLMOTT**

SEND US NEWS OF YOUR USEFUL FIND! WRITE TO IUS@ZIFFDAVIS.COM

REPAIRMAN: PAUL ARTHUR/GETTYONE; MONKS: PAUL GREBLIUNAS/GETTYONE

SONY

DREAM ON™ >>>>

The scar from the shark off Peru.

The scar from the reefs off Baja.

The scar from the fishing trawler off San Clemente.

The scar from the rocks off Alaska.

Life, they say, is in the details. And no detail escapes the Sony Digital8® Handycam® camcorder. Not only does Digital8 let you record high resolution digital video on affordable 8mm tape, but it captures stunningly crisp digital still images on Memory Stick® media. The i.LINK® (IEEE 1394)* DV Interface lets you easily transfer and edit video like never before. With SteadyShot® Picture Stabilization System, shaky shots are all but extinct. Plus, record in total darkness with NightShot™ 0 Lux Recording System. Sony Digital8 camcorders. Because when there's more in your camera, there's more in your movies. **www.sony.com/di**

Digital 8

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COMPARING THE TRIED-AND-TRUE WITH THE NET-AND-NEW BY DAVID SHEFF

BUILDING BOOKSHELVES

OLD WAY

1 The kids needed more room for books. I got out the toolbox and hit the hardware store for boards, brackets, screws, finishes, and the like. Once back at home, I set to work.

2 I thought the job would be easy, but I soon realized I was mistaken. The brackets kept pulling out of the wall. When I thought I finally had one secured, it fell on my head.

3 Called a friend for help. He took one look at the mess, laughed, and fled. (He'll regret that. Just wait until the next time he needs to borrow my glue gun.)

TIME ELAPSED 5 wasted hours

COMMENTS My wife was not too impressed with my carpentry skills. Good thing I have other attributes.

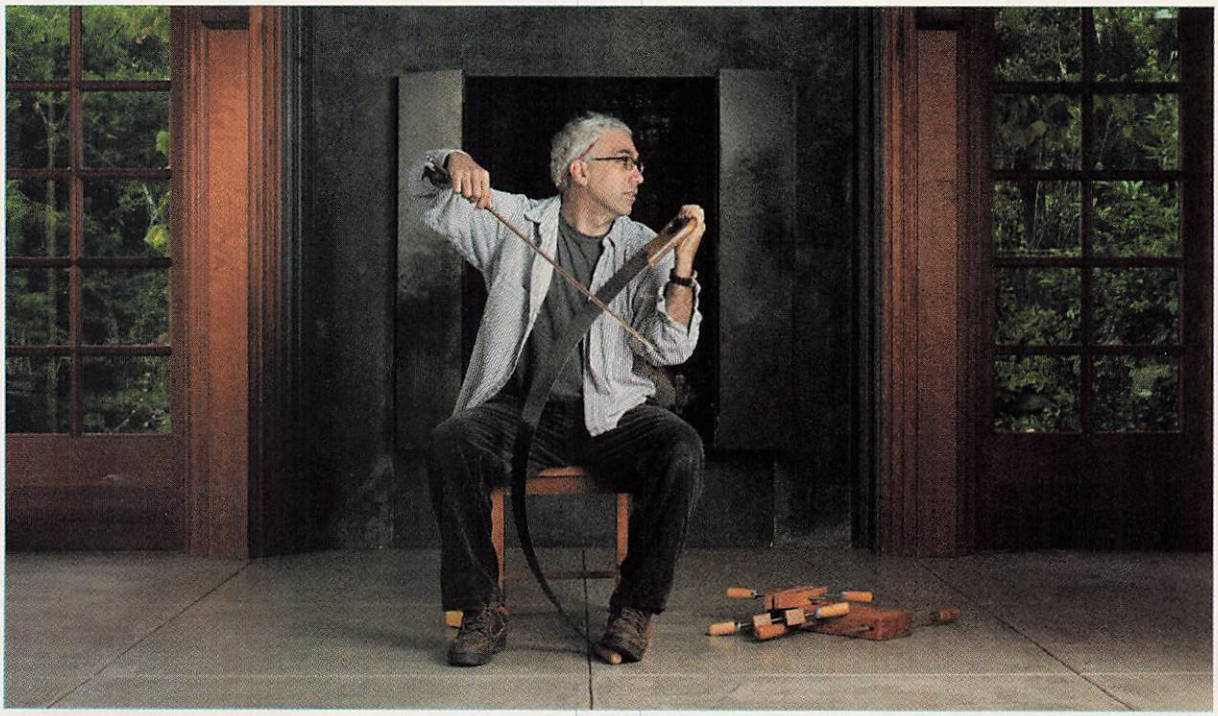
NET WAY

1 Admitting that I needed help, I consulted the Net. My search led me to the remarkable **A Man's Life: How to Build a Bookshelf in a Small Apartment Using Practically No Tools [manslife.com/hardmach/fixit/bookcase]** on a wonderful, witty Web site filled with practical knowledge. Although I live in a house, not an apartment, the shelf size was perfect for the kids' room.

2 Following the clear directions, I proceeded. Amazing! I felt so...so *handy*. When she saw the finished shelf, my wife was in awe. The kids started piling on their books.

TIME ELAPSED 7 hours

COMMENTS The kids' collection of Harry Potter books looks spectacular on this impressive bookshelf.



BART NAGEL

WINNER: NET WAY The Web provided the info without a special trip to the library or bookstore.

SENDING (PAPER) HOLIDAY CARDS

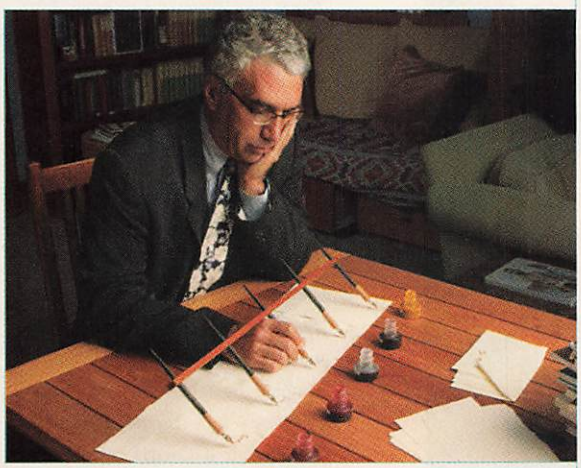
OLD WAY

1 E-cards are fine for gags or last-minute congratulations, but not for the holidays. At a shop in our neighborhood, I selected beautiful greeting cards on thick paper and bought several boxes.

2 Sat by the fire, wrote notes, and addressed the cards while thinking about my friends. I ran out of cards at the letter *M*.

TIME ELAPSED 30 minutes shopping and 2½ hours writing, addressing, and mailing cards

COMMENTS Had to go back out for more cards.



NET WAY

1 Turned to the Net, but it was tough to get past the plentiful sites that offer virtual cards. Persistence paid off: I found online ordering for paper cards at **G. C. 411 [greetingcards411.cceasy.com]** and **Crane's [all-christmas-cards.com]**. Both sites offer personalized as well as standard cards, but the selection was somewhat limited.

2 **Getacard.com** has Christmas and Hanukkah cards that can be bought and written online. The company will even mail them out for you, too.

3 For my friends who are Chinese, **Fat Ming Co. [fatming.com]** has beautiful Chinese New Year paper greeting cards.

4 Despite a large assortment of humorous and sentimental cards, I just couldn't find the perfect cards online.

TIME ELAPSED Another 2 hours

COMMENTS On some traditions, the Net can't improve.

WINNER: OLD WAY **The ritual of selecting and writing out cards is a tradition that shouldn't change.**

VOLUNTEERING MY TIME

OLD WAY

1 At holiday time, I always contribute to charities, but this year especially I wanted to offer more: my time. I called the local homeless shelters and food banks, and an after-school program for institutionalized children. All were eager for help.

2 With my children, who at first were reluctant but soon became enthusiastic participants, I began regular volunteering.

TIME ELAPSED 30 minutes on the phone (with the yellow pages nearby), and then 6 to 8 hours a week on the jobs

COMMENTS The conventional wisdom regarding volunteering is true: One gets back more than one gives.

NET WAY

1 Searched for *volunteer opportunities* and found links to local, national, and international organizations. In my area, **The Volunteer Center of San Francisco [www.vcsf.org]** lists hundreds of worthwhile opportunities.

2 Further searching led me to the **San Francisco Street Project [sfsp.org]**, **Hands On San Francisco [hosf.org]**, and many others.

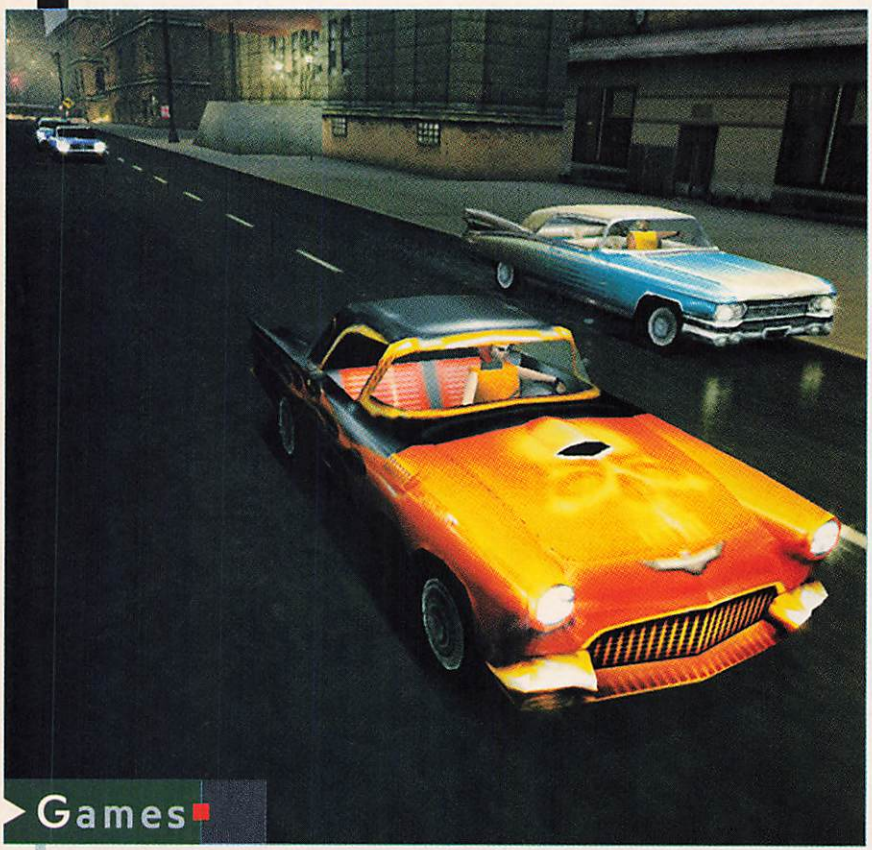
TIME ELAPSED Another 30 minutes online

COMMENTS I recommend trying different types of organizations and then making a regular commitment.

WINNER: NET WAY **While there are numerous opportunities both ways, the Net leads to more choices.**

Content

what to watch, hear, read, and play online



Games

YOU'RE MOTORIN'

A new racing game cruises to the top

IF YOU'RE MORE INTO STEERING PROWESS THAN SCI-FI MAYHEM, ELECTRONIC ARTS' LATEST massively multiplayer online game may be what the doctor ordered. In Motor City Online, players can climb behind the wheel of any one of more than 60 classic American cars. Racing and winning lets you buy better parts and additional cars, and players can wager previous winnings in races against other speed demons. With more than 2,000 authentic car parts to choose from, tweak your hot rod's performance before taking to one of the two dozen varied tracks—backdrops include countryside landscapes, city streets, and professional raceways.

Of course, players who don't know a camshaft from a fan belt can always just pick a car and enter the fray. They can also race solo against other human opponents or compete in teams. The Motor City Online disk ($39.99) is required for play, as is $9.99 per month for unlimited gameplay. **[motorcityonline.com]**

MARC SALTZMAN

CHECK IT OUT GO TO YIL.COM/CRITICS FOR MORE INFO

Game Shorts

HARRY POTTER Even if you've never heard the words Quidditch, Quaffle, or Bludger, you'll get a kick out of this collection of four mini-games tied to the Harry Potter movie: Beater Practise, Chaser Practise, Keeper Practise, and Seeker Practise. Your hand-eye coordination should improve, if not your spell-casting ability. M.S. ★★★ **[harrypotter.warnerbros.com/game] (Warner Bros., free)**

GLADIATOR Maximus, schmaximus. It's your turn to become a Roman gladiator in the great Colosseum. You are equipped with a sword and mace, and your mission is to take out the enemy—an onslaught of enemies, in fact—by swinging the right weapon at the right time. M.S. ★★★ **[circusx.com/games/gladiator.html] (CircusX.com, free)**

Music Shorts

OUTKAST, "SO FRESH, SO CLEAN (LIVE)" The southern rappers have an outpost in the Great White North at BMG Music Canada's site, C2M. This U.K. concert performance is full of hot-pursuit rhymes and throbbing rhythms. Also check out the Q&A and more exclusive performances. A.M. ★★★★ **[click2music.ca/outkast/extras.html]**

THE CONTENT COMMITTEE: ADAM McGOVERN, MARC SALTZMAN

MON **BEHIND THE SCREEN:** 12:30 P.M. FLICKS **[DISCUSS.WASHINGTONPOST.COM/WP-SRV/LIVEONLINE]**

TUE **PRO FOOTBALL WEEKLY:** 5 P.M. GAB ABOUT THE GRIDIRON **[ESPN.COM/COMMUNITY/CHAT]**

WED **ACTION FIGURE COLLECTING CHAT:** 9 P.M. PLASTIC FANTASTIC **[ACTIONFIGURES.ABOUT.COM/MPCHAT.HTM]**

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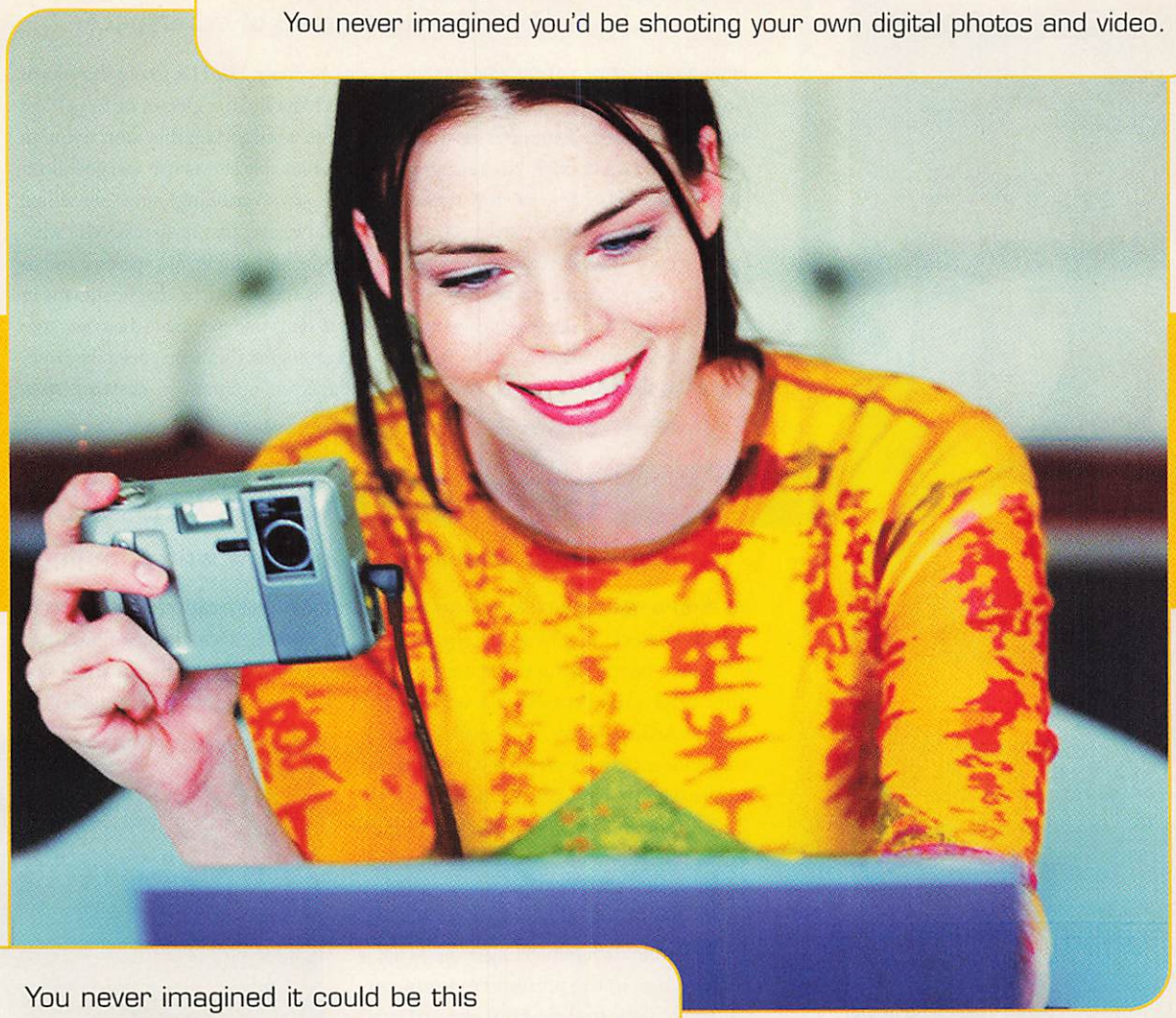

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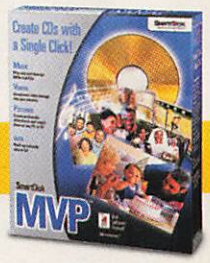

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Music

HARD-ROCK DRIVE

Is Dr. O the supergroup of cyberspace?

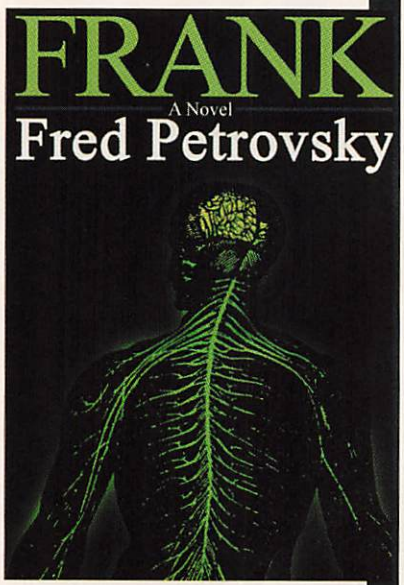
IN THE BIZARRO WORLD OF THE WEB, CULT FIGures are king. Witness **MP3.com: Dr. O [mp3.com/o]**, a trivia stumper incarnate that's racked up enough No. 1 songs in its category to become the top-ranked band in the alternative hard-rock and metal section on MP3.com. Led by two actual M.D.'s (ear-and-throat men, with any luck), the band has had hits in other genres, too, from Speed Metal to Power Pop. (Alas, the lack of a Singing Physicians category has robbed Dr. O of a showdown with Manolin, the Doctor of Salsa.) We have to admit, when they stop trying to be fashionably alternative and go full-on into speaker-grinding, guitar-shredding sonic miasmas, they're quite good at what they do. The public has spoken, and as long as the would-be diagnosticians in Dr. O don't underestimate their own stylistic strengths, they won't need the critics for a second opinion. ADAM McGOVERN

Books

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Time Warner endeavors to put new writers online

THE WAY EVERYBODY'S KICKING E-BOOKS NOW, YOU'D THINK THEY'D KNOCKED OVER A LINE OF parked Harleys. So it's encouraging to see Time Warner Books launch iPublish to introduce new writing talent on the Net. Now they've brought out their first three titles: Fred Petrovsky's *Frank* ($2), a modern-day retelling of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*; Kate Donovan's *Harmless Error* ($2), a romantic comedy about two lawyers defending a killer who hasn't actually killed; and Jerry Davis's *Travels* ($2), a sci-fi vision of a world in which TV's subliminal power is so influential that producers take creativity-enhancing drugs to stay ahead of the competition.



But while such publishing projects are a positive sign in the present environment, unhappily, none of these books ignited even the smallest spark of interest in this reader. Their prose is banal; their characters, cliché; their dialogue, flat; and their plot developments, predictable and glacial. *Frank,* about a brain transplant, raises not very interesting questions about identity and medical hubris. In *Harmless Error,* the passage in which the heroine meets the hero reads, in part, "The man obviously had charisma as well as a great build. And he was waiting for her to say something, so she said, 'Hi.'" *Travels* is a shade more inventive—one of the characters has a 14-year-old daughter who weighs 400 pounds—but this only makes the book the least mediocre of the three.

Are there equally bad books released in mainstream publishing? Sure. But unlike in the world of electronic books, there are so many good books in mainstream publishing that you scarcely notice the duds. Still, in order for the e-book medium to develop, our message to iPublish can only be, Keep trying. **[ipublish.com]** CHRISTOPHER LEHMANN-HAUPT

THU **CNN.COM CROSSFIRE CHAT:** 7:30 P.M. TALK POLITICS **[CNN.COM/CNN/PROGRAMS/CROSSFIRE]**

FRI **GARDENING:** 3 P.M. GROW STUFF **[WWW.BBC.CO.UK/LIVECHAT/CHATROOMS/CHAT_GARDENING.SHTML]**

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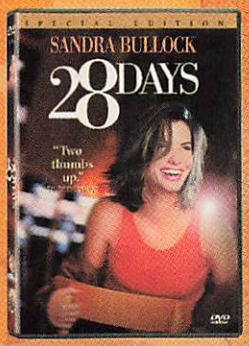

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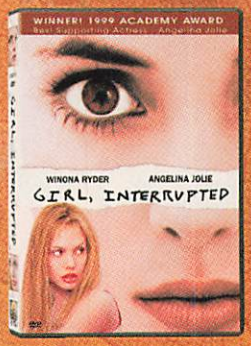

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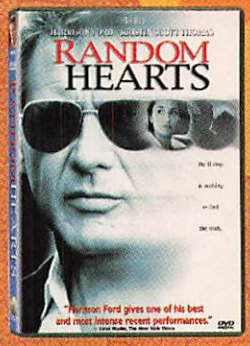

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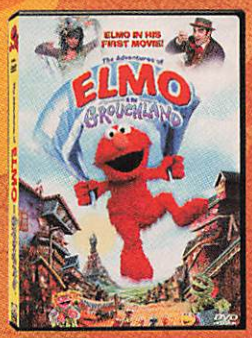

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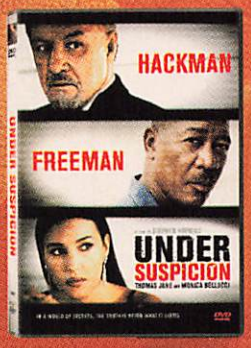

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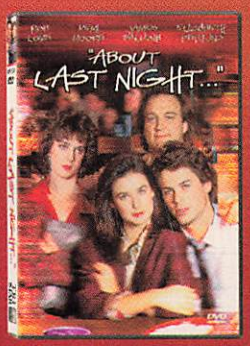

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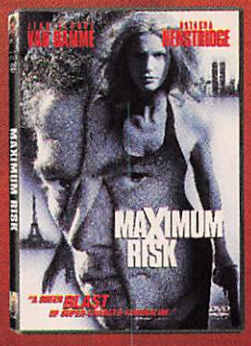

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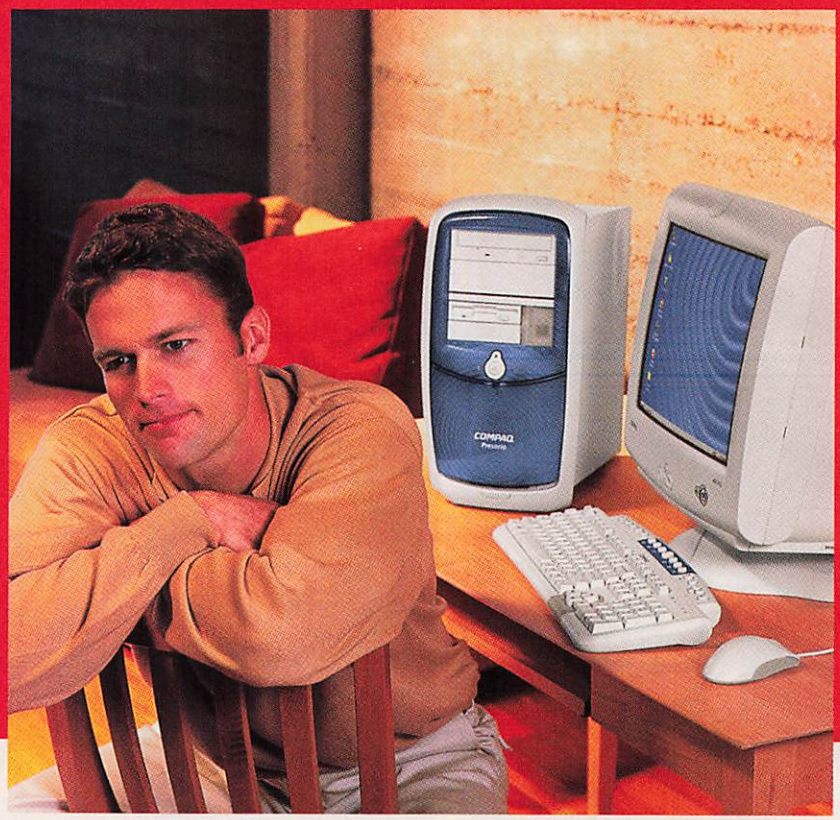

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HOW TO GET THE MOST NET IN THE LEAST TIME

EDITED BY DON WILLMOTT

find it

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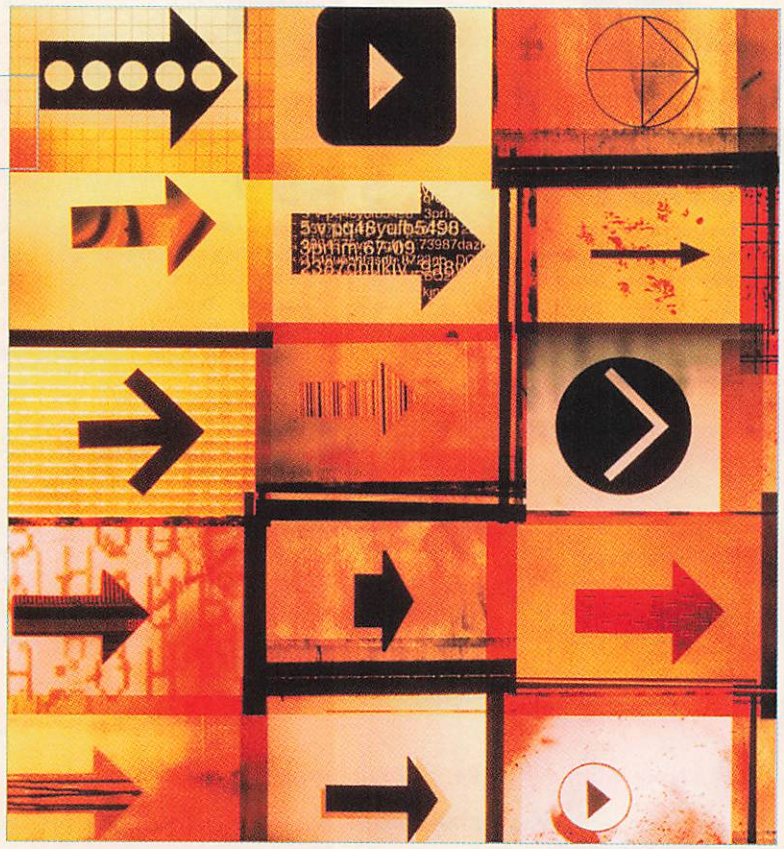

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Teoma [teoma.com] hasn't indexed as much of the Net as leading search engines such as Google have, but its three layers of results are useful for helping narrow your search. In addition to a simple list of results, Teoma offers Experts' Links, the sites that it determines have the greatest number of relevant additional links and are therefore the best places to continue your research.

WiseNut [wisenut.com] generates topic guides, too (called WiseGuides), and it lets you judge the potential depth and value of a site by telling you how many more pages at that site matched your search terms. The higher that number, the likelier it is that the site will be a relevant resource for you.

You'll find some clever ways to organize your searches at **iLor [ilor.com]**. The service uses Google to generate its results, but that's just the beginning. Move your mouse over a listing, and an iLor box pops up with four helpful options. The best one: My List, an on-screen window that collects the results you like best. Once you build up a good list you can convert it into Favorites, or e-mail it to a friend.

Since **SurfWax [www.surfwax.com]** is a metasearch engine, it checks the results of several search engines simultaneously. You can narrow the results by including only a few search engines in the search, and each result can be analyzed by SurfWax's SiteSnap, a window that tells you exactly what you'll find at the page before you actually click over to it.

NEIL LESLIE/PHOTONICA

quick tips

ALL-ACCESS PASS

If you're the type of person who likes prepaid phone cards, you may want to test out **Slingshot [slingshot.com]**—it's prepaid Internet access on a CD. For travelers without nationwide Net service, it's fantastic. Just purchase a Slingshot CD at Staples, CompUSA, or 7-Eleven, and insert it into your PC (the service isn't compatible with Macs). Enter your access code (included with the CD), and you're online. The service costs approximately $10 for 600 minutes of access from a local number or 120 minutes of nationwide toll-free access where no dial-up number is available. Run out of minutes? Just buy another card at the store, or go to the site with your credit card to get more time.

LYRICAL GEM

The **PureLyrics [purelyrics.com]** WinAmp plug-in may not be the most essential utility around, but it's a lot of fun. The free PC-only software connects music listeners to a database of lyrics that includes more than 60,000 songs. When a tune begins playing on your computer, the plug-in launches the lyrics in WinAmp's minibrowser, and you can sing along to your heart's content. The software is available in five languages: English, Spanish, French, Finnish, and Swedish.

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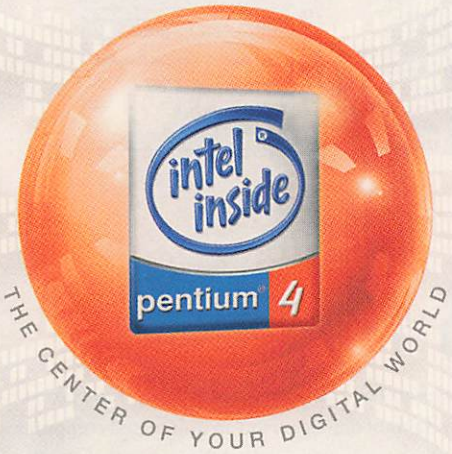

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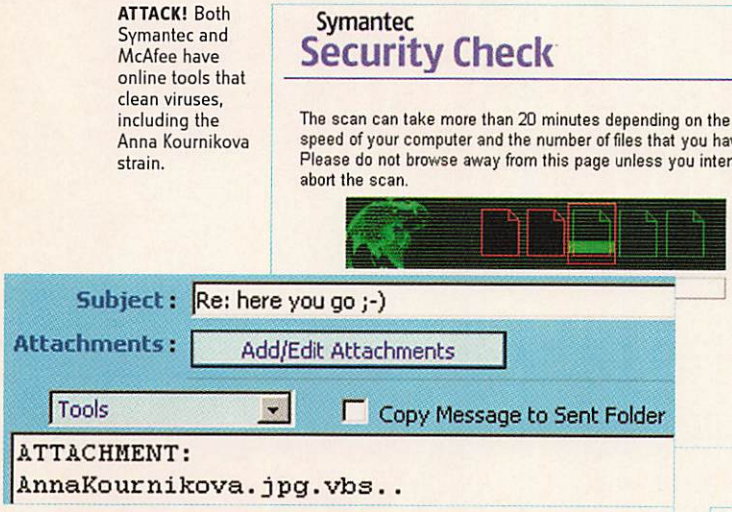
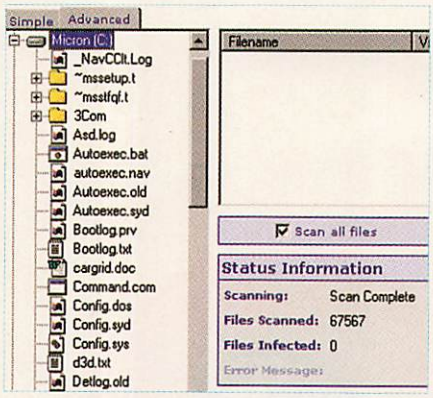
A VIRUS HAS SLIPPED THROUGH YOUR DEFENSES. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?

ATTACK! Both Symantec and McAfee have online tools that clean viruses, including the Anna Kournikova strain.





.01 what happened

You got a bum file. Maybe you downloaded the wrong attachment; maybe a coworker slipped you a dirty floppy. Antivirus programs look for generic attacks as well as for the specific signatures of individual worms, viruses, and Trojan horses, but unless you update your definitions regularly by downloading revisions, your software may miss the most recently created nasties. Even then, some may still get through. Of course, if you don't have an antivirus program installed, anything can happen.

.02 what you see

Anomalous behavior. Recent viruses were spread primarily by e-mailing themselves to some or all of the people in your address book. You might notice unusual activity on your Net connection or cable modem lights. You might get a batch of e-mails from friends asking why you sent them an odd message. Corporate e-mail systems that have been fortified against viruses may bounce your e-mail and send you a warning statement. Some programs may not run, or you may get Windows error messages even though you haven't messed with any hardware or software settings. Any of those symptoms indicates that further investigation is warranted.

.03 what to do

Don't panic. Viruses and worms tend to spend some time propagating before they do their damage. Find an uninfected computer and go to an antivirus vendor site such as **Symantec: Security Response [symantec.com/avcenter]** or **McAfee.com**. Try to identify the rogue software that's bugging your computer. You'll find free removal tools, which you can put on a floppy and run on the infected PC to target specific threats. Sometimes you'll find directions for editing the Windows Registry or removing specific files by hand. If you have a home network, you may need to disconnect each computer and clean it individually before reconnecting.

Trend Micro: House Call [housecall.antivirus.com] and McAfee also have online virus scanners, though they don't always work well. Trial copies of antivirus programs are available on the sites, too; often these are enough to help you get back to work.

.04 long-term solutions

Back up your important files regularly, and have a plan in place to get up and running quickly. Look into CD-Rs for creating full backups and online systems such as My Yahoo! that store e-mail lists, phone books, bookmarks, and other critical data, allowing you to access it from any computer. **LOU DOLINAR**

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webuser surf guru

CREATE A DIGITAL PHOTO ALBUM FOR YOUR PC; FIND THE BEST CELL PHONE RATES IN YOUR AREA

Q» Many services let me store my photos on the Web, but the sites load too slowly on a 56Kbps connection. I'm looking for a good program that will let me create a digital photo album on my desktop.

A» During the past year, I've been posting my digital pix on such sites as **Shutterfly [shutterfly.com]** and **Kodak PictureCenter [playground.kodak.com]**. I like these services, but you're right: It's a nuisance to have to log on in order to access digital photo albums. I recommend you download and install **Adobe ActiveShare [www.activeshare.com]**, free software that lets you create digital photo albums on your PC. ActiveShare also provides basic photo-editing tools for adjusting image brightness and removing red eyes from your pix, and offers a feature that lets you e-mail photos directly to friends and family. The program works on PCs running Windows 95, 98, 2000, or NT. For a more full-featured photo management program, check out **FlipAlbum [flipalbum.com]**, which features a realistic page-flipping album interface (c'mon, cute counts for something, especially when baby pictures are involved). It's free to try and $49.95 to buy.

Q» Is there a way to spell-check my Web site?

A» Why, yes, there is. Simply enter your site's URL at **Doctor HTML [www2.imagiware.com/RxHTML]** and click the Go button. Check it out if you're the least bit orthographically challenged. In related news, check out **SpellChecker.net**, which offers a spell-check you can add to your site's bulletin boards and chatrooms. The ad-supported version of the software is free and works on both Macs and PCs.

Q» Are there any sites that can help me find a reasonable cell phone plan in my area?

A» Sorting through the hundreds of available cell phone plans can be a waking nightmare. But it doesn't have to be, thanks to a couple of comparison shopping sites that'll help locate the best deals in your cellular market. Begin your search at **GetConnected [getconnected.com]**. Plug in your ZIP code and the free service will hunt down the latest and greatest in phone plans. (The site can also scour for local Internet and cable television service.) **MyRatePlan.com** also searches for plans by ZIP code, but the site offers a more interactive approach; when selecting the best deals, it takes into account monthly phone usage, as well as the percentage of time spent making long-distance calls. With luck, maybe you'll uncover one of those rock-bottom pay-as-you-go plans that are so hard to find.

EDDIE BOWEN/WWW.COSMO7.COM

aol watch

Beware the AOL Trojan horse. This is a program that, much like a virus, spreads via e-mail. Often it is designed to steal your AOL password. The Trojan horse APStrojan.qa, for example, has been circulating online for almost a year and does just this; it appears as a message in your in-box, with the subject line "Hey you" and an attachment labeled MINE.EXE. If you think you may have been infected by an AOL Trojan horse, go to **PC: Trojan Horse Help [Keyword: Virus]**. And remember: Smart surfers always treat e-mail attachments with suspicion. Proceed with caution, even when the message is from a friend.

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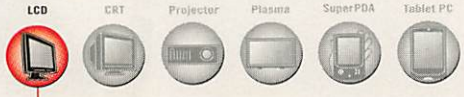
Call us at 800-888-8583, visit **ViewSonic.com** or see your computer dealer for the full range of sizes and TV tuner options available. Then give the gift that goes both to work and play.



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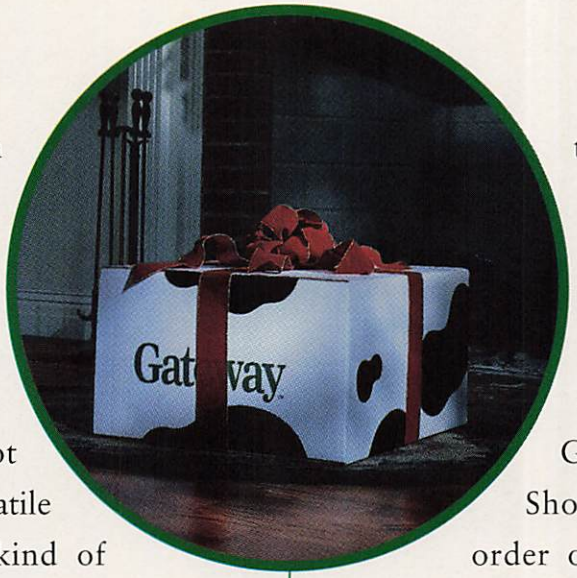

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- Microsoft® Windows®XP Home Edition
- Microsoft Works Suite 2001[2]
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- 512MB RDRAM
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SO WHO'S DEMANDING MOVIES ON DEMAND?

Hollywood studios plan to offer movies for downloading via the Net. I wish them well, but I don't predict much success. When the movies-on-demand industry finally matures, most deliveries will be by cable or satellite, to the screens people use for actually watching movies. It's hard to imagine the family clustered around a computer monitor. (Downloads can be aimed at a TV connected to the Net, but WebTV users are relatively rare.) The trend in home video-viewing is toward larger and better pictures, not smaller Net-delivered versions said to be "as good as VHS" (but not as good as cable, satellite, or DVD).

The studios say that when the system goes online around year's end or early next year, a 500MB movie will take 20 to 40 minutes to download via broadband. (At 56Kbps, it would be faster to drive to the next state and rent it.) Once downloaded, the movie can be watched as often as you like for 24 hours, and then it will self-destruct. If you haven't watched it after 30 days, it self-destructs anyway.

Movie fans with good memories will recall that the marketplace not long ago rejected a similar concept, that of the Divx—those DVDs you never had to return to the store, but had to view in a 48-hour window.

True, Web delivery is more convenient than going to the store. But movie lovers might prefer to drive to the store and rent a movie for three days for $2 to $4 instead of downloading it for one day at a cost of $5.95 or so. For that matter, many people prefer a Web-based system such as **Netflix [netflix.com]**, which offers a vast selection for a flat monthly fee. Netflix mails DVDs directly to your home as fast as you can watch and return them—or lets you keep them as long as you want. And **Facets [www.facets.org]** offers all those hard-to-find titles, foreign films, and documentaries with a similar mail-back system.

There is another factor involved: *People want to go to the store.* The trip to the video store is part of the experience for many movie fans, who want to rummage through the shelves and read the boxes. They can rummage on the Web and read reviews, but that's not the point. The trip is the point.

The trip to the video store is part of the experience for many movie fans, who want to rummage through the shelves and read the boxes

Every office has a coffee machine. Some of them make pretty good coffee. Yet office workers prefer a 10- to 15-minute round-trip to the nearest caffeine café, to spend $1.50 for a coffee or $4 for a grande half-caff extra-hot extra-shot mochaccino. Starbucks isn't selling just coffee. It's selling a trip away from the office.

If I'm at home and want to watch a movie and don't want to leave the house and there is nothing on my countless satellite channels that interests me, I might want to order a movie via satellite or cable and watch it with good picture and sound on my giant screen. But before I would spend 40 minutes downloading a VHS-quality version to watch on my computer, I would read a book.

And if I *were* to read that book (temporary change of subject), it would be a book made out of paper, and not an e-book. Faithful readers will recall that in these pages last year I expressed doubts about the future of e-books. Ridiculing a Microsoft time chart that predicted the demise of traditional books, I predicted that e-books themselves were headed for the remainder bins. A year later, e-books have been a sharp disappointment. With the exception of a Stephen King title, few have sold as many as 1,000 copies.

There is a use for e-books. It is not as a replacement for traditional books but as a way for lawyers to carry around a law library, or students to replace a backpack full of textbooks. If there is a use for on-demand video on the Web, it is also as a tool, a reference, a quick check, a way to convey information.

For actually *watching* movies at home, the traditional modes will prevail: rented or purchased videos, satellite or cable delivery, big TV screen. There are things that the Web does well, but replacing books and reshaping traditional video-watching patterns are not two of them. ■

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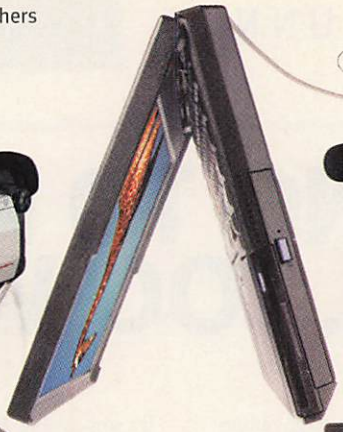
NEW



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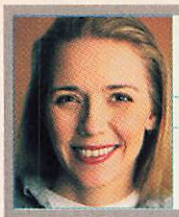

ANGELA GUNN

GETTING TO KNOW YOU...TOO WELL

Q: An acquaintance of mine is very private. Okay to go online to find out more about him?

A: Frankly, I don't trust you. Someone doesn't want to give you details about his personal life, so you're going to use the Net to dig them up anyway? I think I understand why he doesn't want to share much with you. You haven't earned it.

Can anyone expect complete privacy when information makes its way online? No. Can the Web help you find out a whole lot from a relatively small launching pad—a name, a phone number? Yes. Does this mean that you ought to hole up in your den, reconstruct someone's life through random news clippings and ancient Usenet postings, and proudly feel you've gotten to "know" this person? No, no, no. And shame on you for not knowing what "no" meant when your acquaintance used (or implied) the word.

If your acquaintance has a Web site, you're allowed a leisurely tour through it or a cursory search to make sure the person whose number you got in Starbucks is not an ax murderer. And that's it. Rooting around like a love-struck 12-year-old looking for 'N Sync gossip is beneath you. Digging any deeper than it would take to find out information you'd plausibly learn in casual conversation ("So, did I hear somewhere that you're a fan of jug-band blues?") is only going to make you look stupid, or scary. And snuffling for anything that might be truly personal—political leanings, sexual orientation, a lady's real age—is absolutely off-limits. Just because you can get more doesn't mean that you ought to. Or, come to think of it, that you deserve to.

Rooting around like a love-struck 12-year-old looking for 'N Sync gossip is beneath you, and is only going to make you look stupid, or scary

Q: How honest do I need to be in my blog?

A: Dear Diary: Remember when I told you about marrying John Cusack last Saturday in Vegas? Actually I just lay on the couch all day watching *Say Anything* and *Leaving Las Vegas.* Sorry about that....

Lying in your diary isn't the same as lying in your blog. The former is like doing ethics alone on a deserted island: It's impossible. Ethics implies action in relation to another being. You can lie in your diary only if you assume someone else is going to read it, in which case it's not really a diary in the strict sense of the word. (Many a junior-high girl has amused herself by writing a fake "diary" designed to scare Mom and Dad. Many a junior-high girl has gotten her butt grounded for the same reason. But I digress.)

Your blog, though, is presumably public. I'll forgive your sins of omission—in fact, considering some of the personal info I've seen on blogs, I'll even thank you for those. Sins of commission, however, are wrong. The "Kaycee Nicole" blog earlier this year, in which a woman made up an entire family and blogged "their" experience with terminal illness, is an extreme example, but a lesser degree of lying isn't right, either.

If you're going to claim to reveal yourself online, no one's telling you to do the informational full monty, but you can't disguise yourself as someone else. What's the point of blogging at all if you're making it up?

Q: A technology called haptics will make it possible to "feel" objects on Web pages by moving a mouse over them. Is haptically enhanced porn on shakier ground ethically than the current visual-only kind, since it involves "touching" the people in the pictures?

A: *(Sigh)* For consensually created porn, no—if the model has agreed to the use of the images online, all that's changed is the scope of the "use." But let me state the should-be-obvious: You're not touching a real person. You're experiencing what some programmer at Microsoft or Logitech thinks you ought to feel when you touch an image that represents skin. Is it creepier to think of someone reading my column online and deciding to touch my hair, or that some unknown geek is deciding what my hair feels like? Hard to say and disgusting to contemplate, but in any case not an ethics issue. ■

Oh, behave: angela_gunn@ziffdavis.com

JAY GULLIXSON

As the garage door closes, you think to yourself:

"Phew, that was fun."

Lincoln LS | It is one of those experiences that, when it's over, you can't help but reflect upon. You'll remember how the acceleration pressed you firmly into the leather-trimmed seats, as the near 50/50 weight distribution precisely guided the LS through every winding curve. When your pulse slows down, you might even remember that you have time to open the garage door and do it all over again. For more information or to schedule a test drive, visit Lincoln.com or call 800 688-8898.

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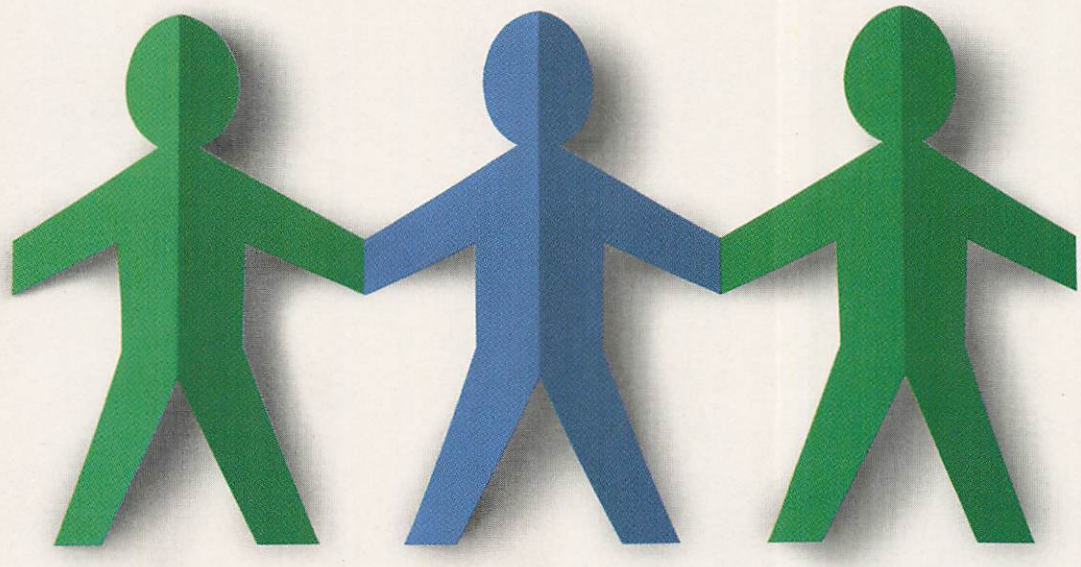
While you're thinking about whether to give this year, here's something else to think about.
Sooner or later, the United Way helps one in three people in our community.
And you never know when you or someone you love might be

the one.



United Way

ROBERT SCHEER

PRIVACY WATCH

WELCOME HOME, BIG BROTHER

Big Brother is back big-time, and Americans are welcoming him warmly. Not surprisingly, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, personal privacy and civil liberties—including those involving the Internet—are on the brink of being eviscerated. In their antiterrorist fervor, the public and our government are enthusiastically embracing any new legislation that gives the appearance of making us safer—whether it actually does so or not.

Suddenly it is fashionable to bypass the guarantees of the Fourth Amendment, assuring the privacy of our homes and effects. Suddenly it is all right to propose—as Congress has with its far-reaching omnibus antiterrorism legislation—that we sweep aside centuries of privacy protections. These protections, it's worth remembering, were *added* to the Constitution by the Founding Fathers after a divisive and terror-filled war in which one-third of their compatriots supported the King of England and another third stayed neutral. They had a lot more potential subversion to worry about than we do, but they considered individual liberties an absolute requirement.

So should we. We are now the strongest nation the world has ever known, and yet we seem all too willing to cast aside the very freedoms that define this nation and its strength.

At press time, bills had passed both the House and the Senate that would make online monitoring as legal as a Texas execution. If Attorney General John Ashcroft has his way, by the time this column is printed this will be the law of the land. The government's argument for this is that the Internet represents a vital link among terrorist organizers for gathering and dispersing information, and that expanded power to monitor e-mail and other electronic traffic is required. This legislation would extend the power the Feds already have with telephone wiretaps to include the broad swath of Internet communication.

Currently, it's relatively simple for a law enforcement agent to get phone company records of the numbers dialed from and to a given telephone. The burden of proof required to get judicial permission is low—merely that the information is "relevant to an ongoing criminal investigation," even if the person whose records are at issue is not the target of a particular investigation.

This new legislation would extend that same broad sweep of power to all Internet communication. But this data would be far more revealing than phone records. Government investigators would be privy to logs of all the Web sites a person had visited, a power akin to being able to subpoena all the books a visitor had perused in a public library—along with his medical records, bill payments, financial transactions, and insurance information.

The intelligence breakdown occurred not on the electronic snooping side, but in the old-fashioned infiltration of potential terrorist organizations

Even without the new legislation, all e-mail traffic is already fair game for government snoopers, as long as they can allege a foreign intelligence connection. After September 11, the FBI became much more aggressive in pressing ISPs to install the DCS1000 monitoring system (which used to be called Carnivore) on their servers. Carnivore can check selected messages (those transmitted from a particular account, or to a particular account) for keywords that might indicate subversive activity.

The basic issue is that we are granting the government a power to control our lives that has not been demonstrated to be effective at stopping terrorism. Despite the considerable electronic surveillance that was in place before September 11, and the subsequent massive increase of electronic snooping, we still have relatively few clues as to the trail of the hijackers.

What we do have is an FBI eager to come calling when they see language in an e-mail that they consider suspicious. In the case of one acquaintance of mine, **continued on 136**

Aseem Batra [aseembatra@hotmail.com] contributed to this column.

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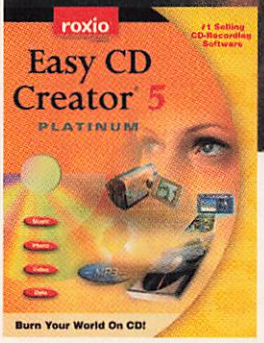

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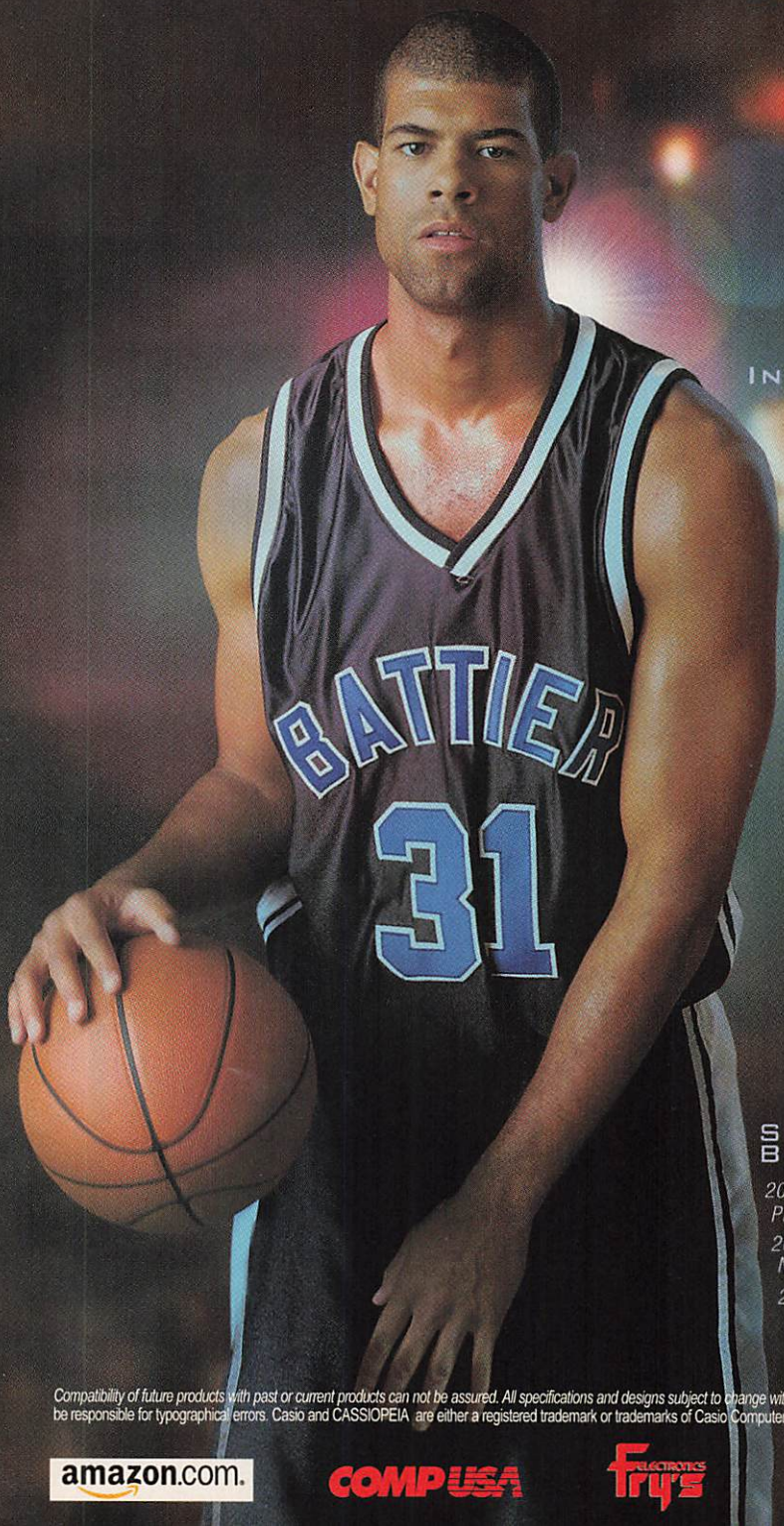

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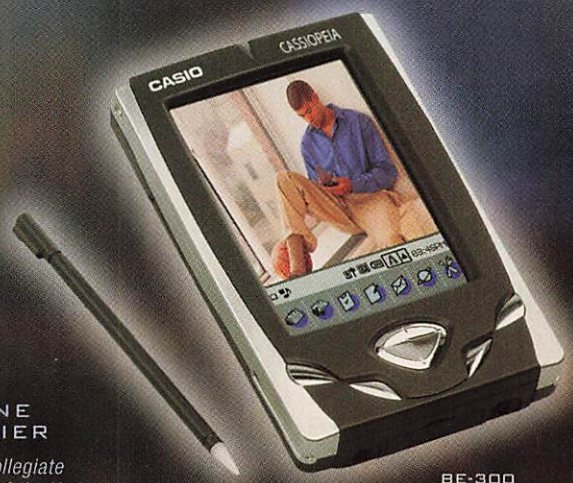

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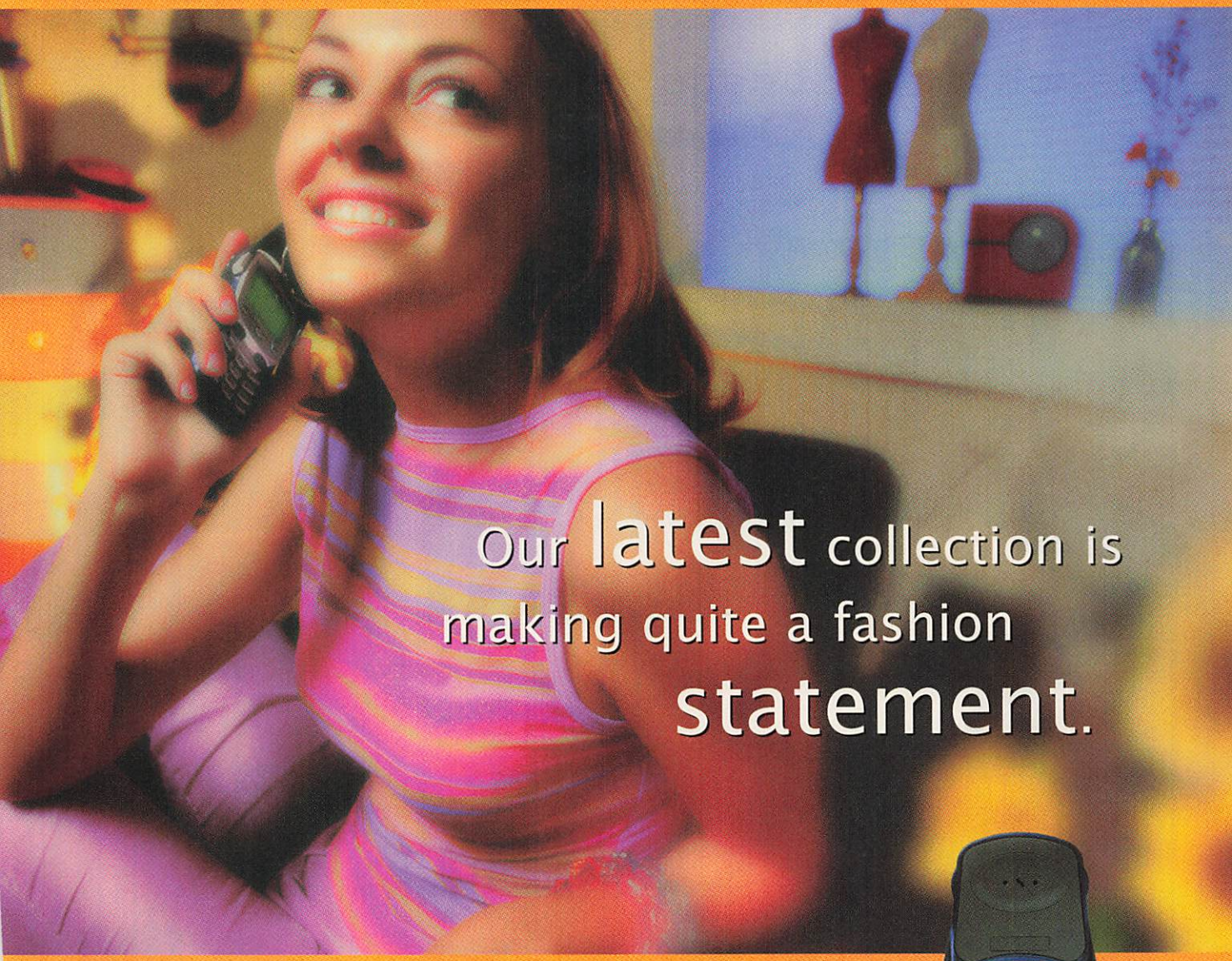

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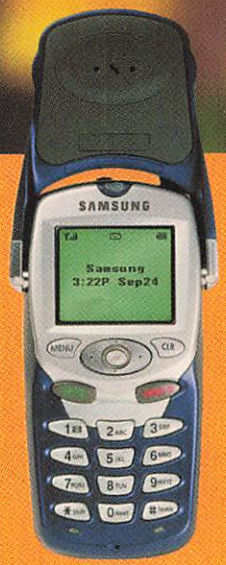

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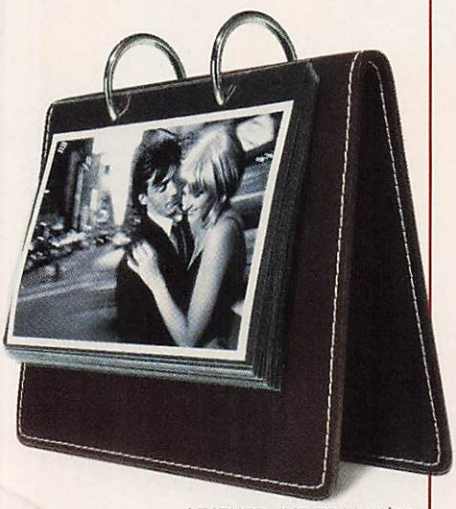

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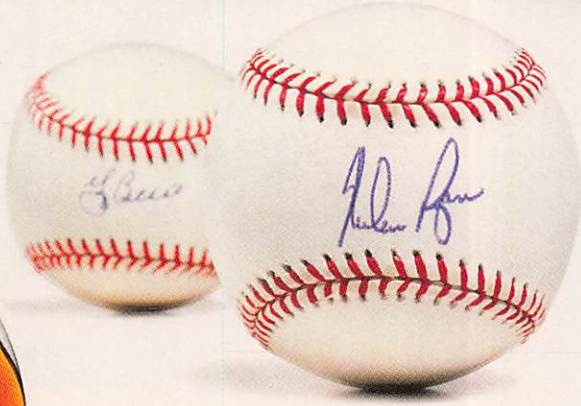

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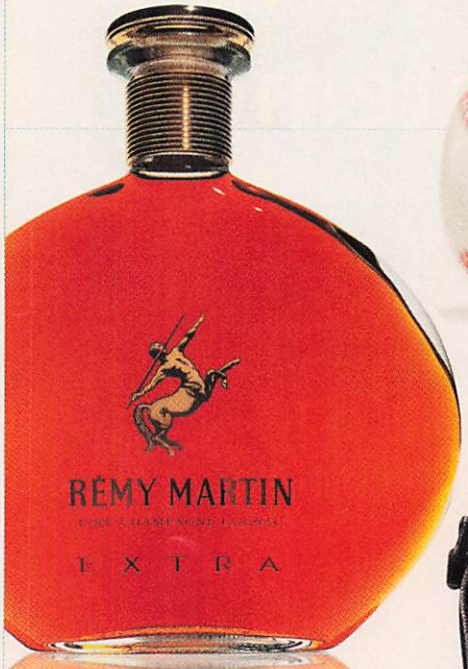

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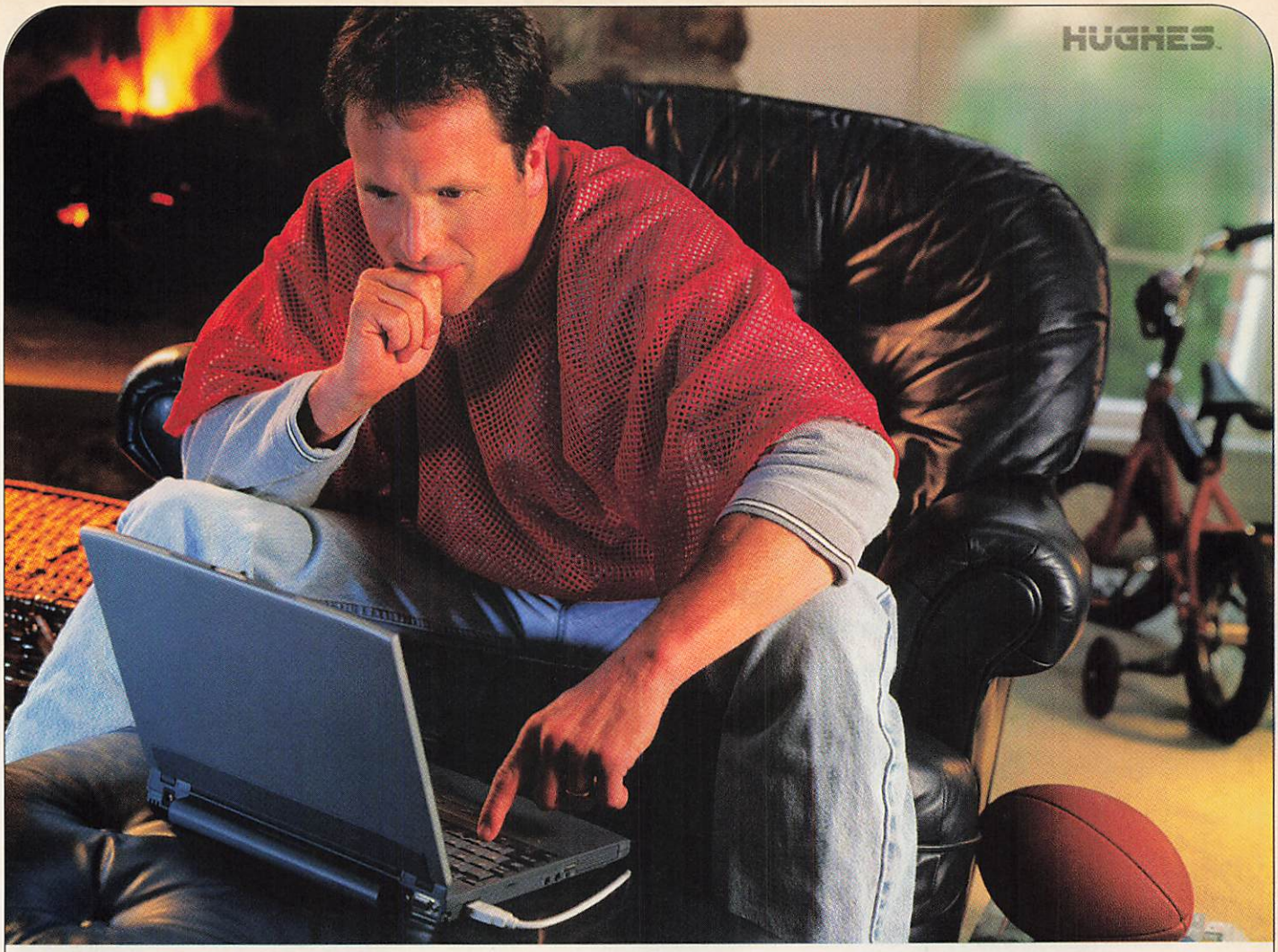

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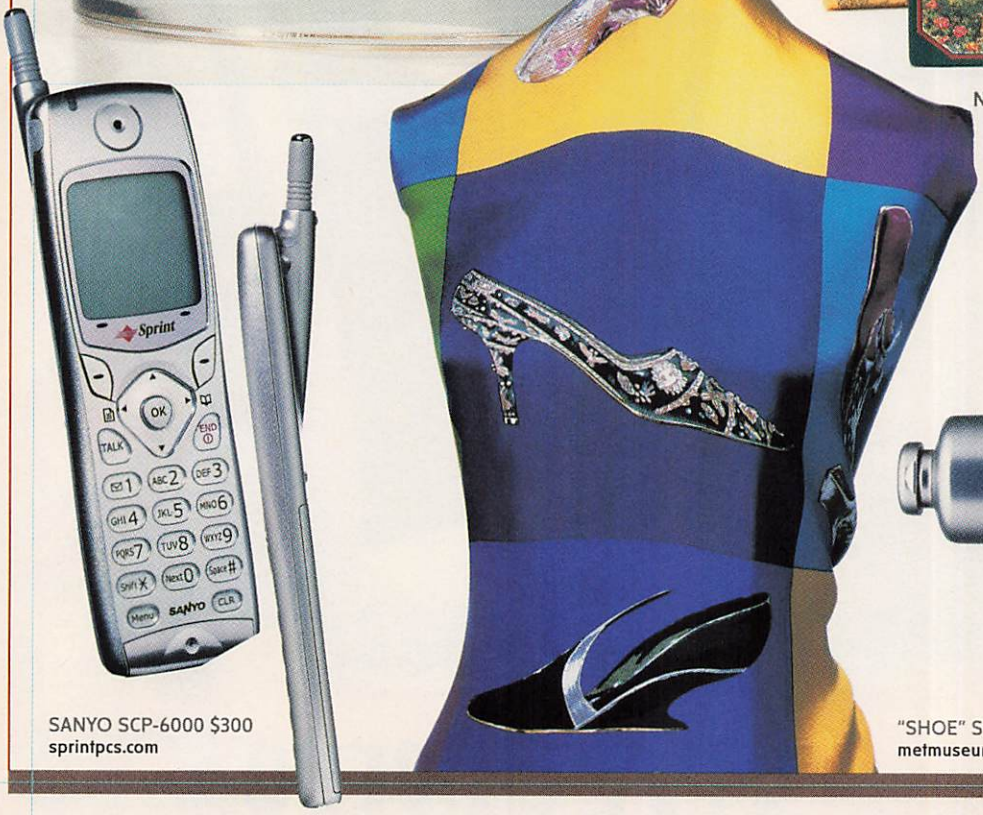

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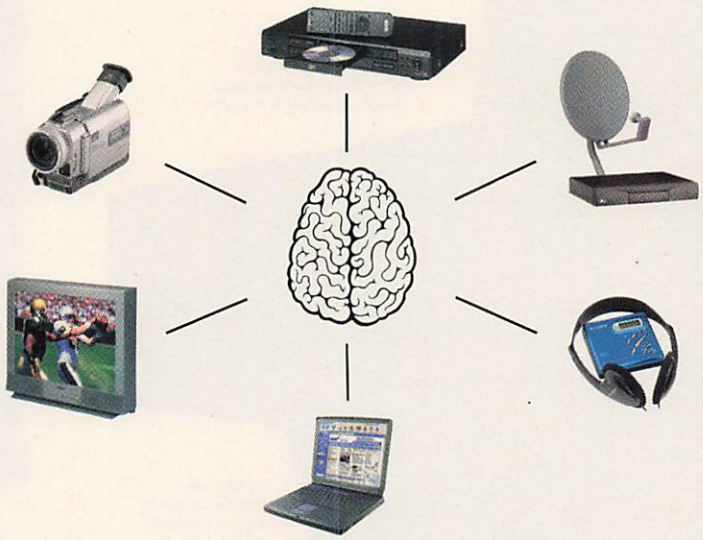

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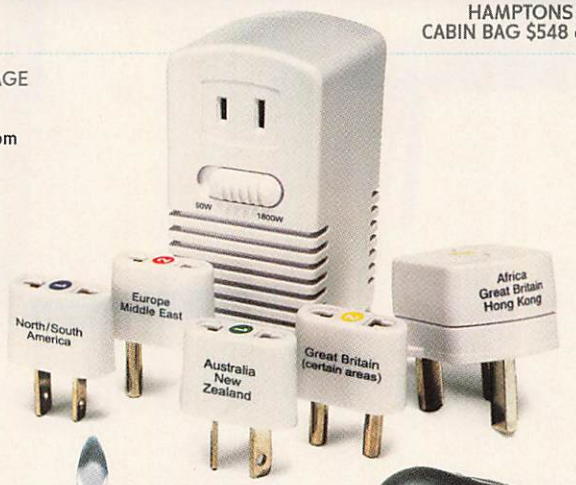

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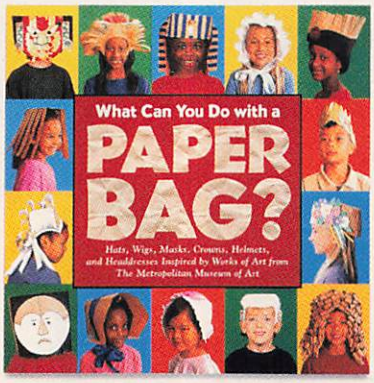

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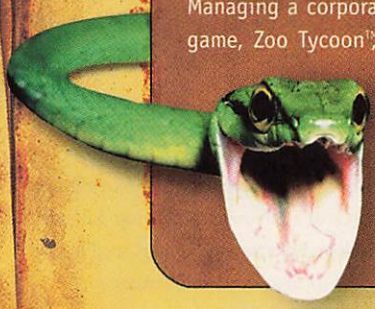

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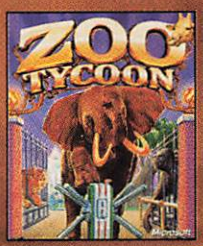

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LAURA FISHER KAISER

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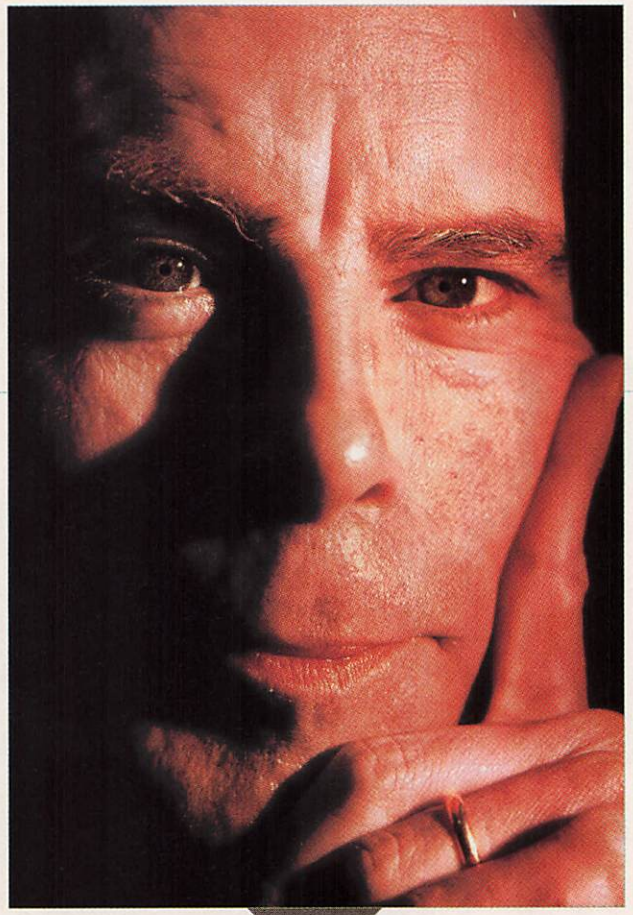


The Once and Future King

The prolific writer reflects on *The Plant*, piracy, and the trouble with e-books

BY CHRISTOPHER LEHMANN-HAUPT

In his recent book *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft,* Stephen King revealed that he wrote his first original prose at the age of six, "a story about four magic animals who rode around in an old car, helping out little kids." His mother paid him a quarter for it. Since then, the animals have been less benevolent—but the money's better. He now has published nearly 60 books (novels, short-story collections, nonfiction works, and other miscellany) under various names (Stephen King, Richard Bachman, and John Swithen) at the rate of one or two a year. In fact, King has become so productive, so driven to turn out more and more every day, that he has characterized writing as his last addiction—having kicked alcohol, Valium, cocaine, and cigarettes (except for three or four at the cocktail hour). These addictions, he says, are "part of that obsessive deal that makes you a writer in the first place."

Perhaps King's hyper-productivity is what drove him to experiment with different forms of publication: printing his books in private editions; writing and releasing *The Green Mile* in six monthly paperback installments; and finally, in the winter of 2000, blazing new trails by selling exclusively online his 16,000-word ghost story, *Riding the Bullet.* Downloadable to handheld devices or computer screens, it prompted more than 400,000 requests in the first 24 hours. This experiment was followed by another: King's decision to publish a full-length novel, *The Plant,* in online installments.

Y-Life met with Stephen King late this summer in the Boston hotel where he was living and writing. A little over two years had passed since the June 1999 accident in which a van hit King

BRIAN SMITH/CORBIS OUTLINE

when he was walking along a Maine country road, and a month had passed since follow-up surgery on his leg. Whenever he stood or walked, King looked a little as if he had been put back together after coming apart—during our talk he grew visibly tired and uncomfortable from sitting too long. But his freshness and vitality still boomed through his voice. Don't expect that productivity—and experimentation—to slow down anytime soon.

Y-LIFE Why did you decide to publish books directly on the Internet?

KING Curiosity. I just wanted to see what would happen. And it was a way of saying to the publishers, "I don't necessarily need to go through you." But the other part of it was to keep the writing fresh.

Y-LIFE Of course, *Riding the Bullet* was first.

KING *Riding the Bullet* was the first piece of fiction I did after the accident. It was too long for most of the magazines, so it just sat there. Then Scribner came to me and said, "Have you got something that we can do on the Internet as a short story?" You have to remember that this came along at the very end of the dot-com bubble. It was like the last exciting thing that happened. They showed me a bunch of stuff from a company that may not even be in business anymore; they had done a piece by Arthur C. Clarke over the Internet that was a five-page deal on television, extraterrestrial life, and the future of broadcasting, and it had made a big splash. I thought to myself, "Jesus, this is like kissing your sister!" This is a little five-page essay that this guy might have flipped off in an afternoon when he couldn't take his nap. I had *Riding the Bullet*, and Scribner took the ball and ran with it. They advertised it like a book. They did a jacket that was like a book's. But their focus was never the Internet; they wanted to sell these little gadgets you actually [hold] in your hand, where you push the button and you go on from page to page.

Y-LIFE An e-book.

KING I never liked it. Other people don't like it. They want to have pages. When I say, "Well, why don't you print it out?" they kind of jig at that, because you have to download this free translating thing to get it on your computer so you can print it. I never had any idea that the technology was still as complex as it is, but we're still in a part of the process where it's like people who bought cars in the 1910s: They would break down by the side of the road, and people would yell, "Get a horse!" People are yelling, now, "Get a book!"

Y-LIFE Why do you think people don't like to read on the screen?

'I think that it takes people a long time to utilize technology to its fullest. You don't utilize the potential of the Internet by having porn conversations in a chatroom'

KING You have to adapt to it. Do you write with a computer yourself?

Y-LIFE Yes. But it was a big jump for me.

KING It was a huge jump for me. And I fought it. My wife basically made me get what I've got now, a little Mac PowerBook. My son tried to put something on it the other night so that I can listen to streaming audio of Red Sox games, and he left me a note that said, "Dad, I can't put this on your lame-ass computer; it doesn't have enough"—whatever—"to do it." Before that I had a Wang word processor, a dedicated word processor; that was all it did. It looked like a piece of Flash Gordon equipment in one of those serials. And it took me a long time to adapt to that. Once you adapt to reading on the screen, it starts to seem natural because you do it so much. But other people are not that way.

Y-LIFE People were reluctant to read your books on-screen then.

KING What was really interesting to me about *Riding the Bullet* and *The Plant* was the people who never talked to me before—business guys, suits: "How's it doing? Wow! You got on the cover of *Time*!" It was always the business aspect of it, the bucks, that was driving the interest: "What are you doing? Are you going to be able to change publishing?" It was never about the stories. That used to drive me crazy, because when we did *The Plant*—basically it was just me and my assistant—we didn't know what we were doing.

Y-LIFE Is that why you haven't yet finished *The Plant*?

KING No. The reason is that the story never really picked me up and carried me. With *The Green Mile* it was something else: That story just spread wings. I didn't write it; *it* wrote it. I love when that happens. But with *The Plant* there was always the sense of pushing the story along. It was never an issue of would people read it or how many people were buying into it. Financially we did quite well. But...

Y-LIFE It remains unfinished?

KING It remains unfinished.

Y-LIFE So how would you assess your experience on the Internet?

KING Financially it was very successful. Particularly *Riding the Bullet*. I mean, here is a novella—I can't remember, I think it was 56 or 65 pages long when it was written—it was a week's work, and it's probably made me $750,000. How many people can say that about a piece of short fiction? And it's been optioned for a film, and all these other things. In terms of renewing my career [following my accident]—it certainly attracted media attention that none of us expected. There was a period when I could have just gone from talk show to talk show—from *Charlie Rose* to *Today* to *Good Morning America* to *60 Minutes* or whatever—and talked about those things, but that isn't anything that I'm really very good at or want to do. So it was successful in that way. Whether or not it was successful as literature, or if it's going to change literature, you're asking the wrong person. I have no idea.

Y-LIFE Will you do it again?

KING Sure. If the right thing comes up,

the right story, the right opportunity, I probably would. But I can't see it becoming a major part of what I put out, because I like books. They have weight, they have a personality, they don't run out of battery juice.

Y-LIFE What about the Net in general? Do you use it any other way?

KING Like everybody else, I'm tied to e-mail, but not very firmly. I don't go on eBay. I'll check out the Drudge Report and links to the Drudge Report once in a while. I do crossword puzzles, and a lot of times when it's "a river in China" or "John O'Hara's first book," I'll go on the Internet and I'll find something there.

Y-LIFE That's okay to do?

KING I think it is. Yeah. I depend on the spell-checker, of course. The new Word 98 doesn't underline *fuck* as a misspelling anymore, which is sort of neat.

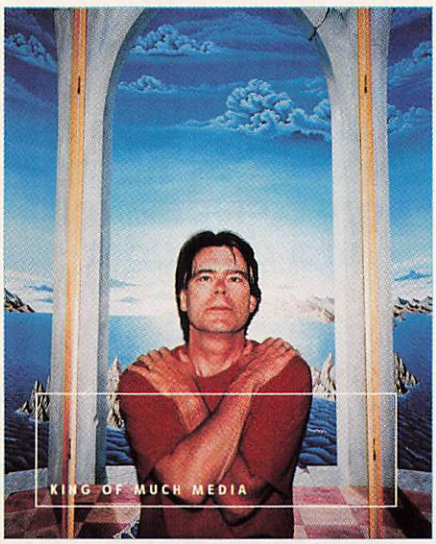
Y-LIFE So you're not into fancy software or gadgets?

KING No. In fact, I wrote my latest novel, *Dreamcatcher,* longhand. I wanted to see what would happen, if it would change anything. It made me slow down, and it made the rewriting process a lot more felicitous. It seemed to me that my first draft was a lot more polished, just because it wasn't possible to go so fast. You can only drive your hand along at a certain speed. So that was good.

Y-LIFE Have you had any unusual experiences on the Net?

KING I've done a couple of those chatroom things for America Online. And I said in context of something, "Gee, I had a shitty experience with this or the other thing." And the chatroom master immediately came back at me and said, "This is a family thing." And I went kinda like, "Whoa! This is like being on TV." Because you're doing it in the privacy of your own room and you're answering these questions that pop up on the screen, and all at once you become aware that it's no different from being on TV or being on the stage, that there are thousands of people in the audience, and it isn't really a virtual environment at all. It's a real one. And you have to be very careful when you're in that situation not to say anything other than to the chatroom master, or all these people sort of fall on you. You know, they assign you a name for the course of the chat, and people are very smart; they get through in a big hurry. It's crazy. Your screen fills up with instant messages: "Are you him?" But other than that, I don't use the Internet enough to have had any really strange experiences.

Y-LIFE Considering that you're someone whose creative business depends on imagining virtual worlds, aren't you impressed with the incredible power of the Internet to create virtual worlds?



KING Anybody who has ever gotten on the Internet knows that quite often when you sign off, a little sign says, "You have been online for 'x' number of minutes." I'm often stunned to see that when I thought I was online for half an hour, I was online for an hour and 15 minutes, because it's like what the Hobbit discovers in *The Lord of the Rings:* Way leads on to way, and suddenly you're lost. Come to think of it, before J.R.R. Tolkien, didn't a guy named Dante say something like that?

Y-LIFE Sure.

KING And it is; it's Dante's *Inferno,* in a way, in there. You get in and sometimes it's very difficult to get out.

Y-LIFE But why not Dante's *Paradiso,* given the Net's vast resources?

KING There are vast resources, but it's tough to tell how much people are using them. I think that it takes people a long, long time to utilize technology to its fullest. We've got a whole generation that [thinks] we fought Vietnam so we can have butane lighters and use those night-vision goggles that you can get from the Sharper Image. Let me put it this way: You don't go a long way toward utilizing the potential of the Internet by having porn conversations in a chatroom.

Y-LIFE You don't feel it sneaking up on you in any way yet?

KING Not really. But I think that it's so much a part of our lives now that it happens almost without [our] realizing it. For a book that has really been influenced by the Internet, I would recommend Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves,* because it's very easy to see the house that he describes as a symbol for the Internet. It's a house that's bigger inside than it is outside. And that's certainly the case with the computer. What's inside it is almost infinite.

Y-LIFE What's your reaction to newspaper stories saying that the forecast of an e-book era was premature?

KING That word could be applied to every bit of e-commerce that's come down the pike, from Amazon to all the dot-coms that collapsed. If you'd asked me a year ago what was bound to be successful, I would have said Napster. But now look: Napster had the legs cut out from under it by the record companies. I went through my own period of paranoia when I did *The Plant* and it seemed to me that *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* were gloating over the fact that the readers weren't ponying up in the same numbers that they ponied up in for *Riding the Bullet.* But maybe it wasn't so much gloating as a sigh of relief because to a large extent these people are still invested in the print world, as I am, myself. So there's a lot of nervousness out there about it, and

JOHN REARDON/KATZ PICTURES MATRIX

at the same time, there's a lot of greed.

Y-LIFE Greed?

KING Certainly at the time that *Riding the Bullet* came out, I couldn't believe how many people wanted to know, "How did you finally unlock the money machine?" I didn't do any such thing. I'm not sure there is any money machine.

Y-LIFE In Jason Epstein's memoir, *Book Business: Publishing Past Present and Future*, he argues that now that books can be published on the Internet, publishers in the old sense are going to disappear, because they really only serve two useful purposes: editing and publicizing.

KING I've heard that argument. He's leaving one thing out that publishers do: They serve as sieves. We depend on them to weed out the crap. If it's from Doubleday, or if it's from Putnam, or if it's from Atheneum, chances are it's probably okay. I mean, anybody can go out and publish a book on the Internet. They're doing it right now. If you go to www.Iwroteanovel.com, you're probably going to find a bunch of books, but a lot of it is going to be crap.

Y-LIFE Like vanity-press publishing.

KING That's right. Welcome to the wonderful world of Dorrance books, electronic style. It's totally nondiscriminatory and nonexclusive. It's perfect democracy. And what that leads to is crap.

Y-LIFE Maybe that's why some of the better writers publishing on the Internet feel they're not taken seriously.

KING We all feel that way. Did you ever meet a writer who didn't have a chip on his shoulder about that?

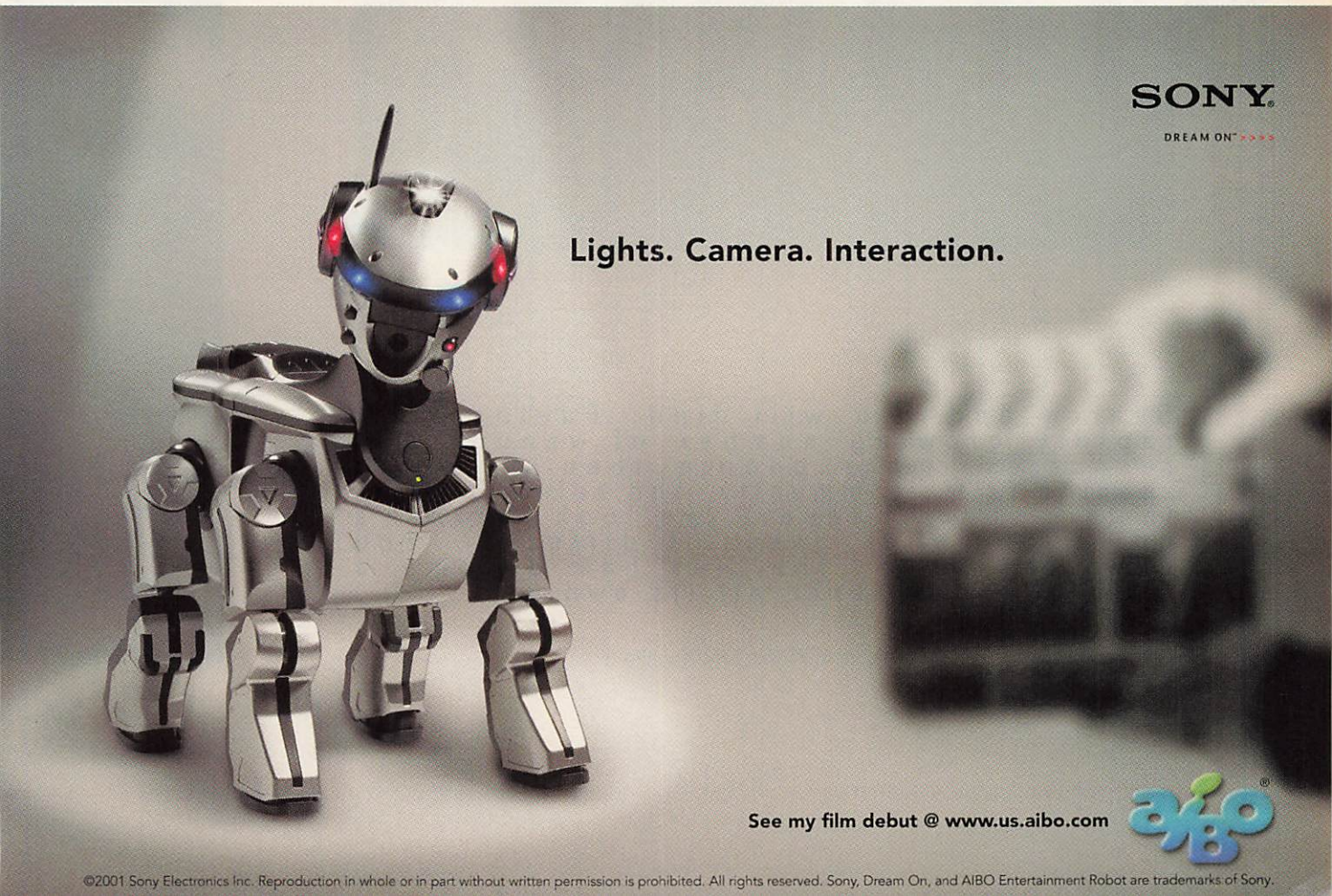
Y-LIFE What about piracy? You're evidently No. 1 among authors pirated on the Internet.

KING I really don't have any response to the pirating of books, other than to point out that the practice predates the Internet by roughly 2,000 years. I'm not even sure it's a bad thing. Remember Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book*? We live in a time of really incredible intellectual self-indulgence; people believe they have a right to read everything, and writers somehow have come to believe they're going to be paid for everything. Both ideas are erroneous.

I can only point out to you that the crackers and hackers are, at least in a case like *Riding the Bullet*, expending $2,500 worth of time and work to steal something they could have gotten free from Amazon anyway. They do it for the pure goof of the thing. And, like most folks who spend too much time on the Web, they are almost willfully stupid about these things.

Ordinary readers, if there are such things, realize that if they pay for what they get, they'll get more of it. So most of them will pay. There are a lot of Chicken Littles out there who are convinced the sky is falling, but it's not. ■

Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, a contributor to *Y-Life*, is a longtime book critic at *The New York Times*.



GOD SITINGS

Search and you will find: Fueled by a rapidly growing number of venues and resources, more people than ever are seeking faith, community, and solace online. In this special report, we look at what's going on, what makes it different, and how, for some, the Net has become a religious experience all its own

Photos by Michael McLaughlin

ARE YOU THERE, GOD?

BY LAURA FISHER KAISER

SEARCHING FOR FAITH

The sky is a beautiful blue this Sunday morning, and it's time for church. I'm not a big churchgoer, but today I have a front-row seat at Atlanta's Peachtree Presbyterian Church. Never mind that I'm neither a Presbyterian nor in Atlanta. Like the rest of the world, I am reeling after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Looking for comfort in the church's live Webcasts, I'm not disappointed.

Though he looks lilliputian inside my Windows Media Player, senior minister Dr. Victor D. Pentz delivers a rousing sermon, at one point comparing Jesus to the brave New York City firefighters—both having descended into hell, "as a southern boy might say, to kick Satan's tail." For the first time in days, a wry smile creeps across my face, and as the Web cam pans over the pews tightly packed with grim congregants, I detect a ripple of relief.

At around the same time, Bill Hull logs on to Peachtree before attending his regular Presbyterian service in the small Texas town of Wimberley. The 56-year-old is one of more than 14,856 who tune in monthly; it's his way of reconnecting with the church of his youth. He confesses he's not as reverent as he would be in person, but he sings the hymns in his head and can print out the church bulletin. "It's not like cable TV, where if you miss the telecast, that's it," Hull says.

A recent Pew Research Center survey reveals that since September 11, nearly seven of 10 Americans are praying more; over the course of each month, some 25 million adults turn to the Internet for religious "expression," according to a survey by Barna Research, a consulting firm in Ventura, California. With more than a million religious sites from which to choose, individuals of every creed—from Adventists to Zoroastrians—are flocking online to congregate, meditate, chat, study, pray, debate, and even date. Travelers, too, are using the Net to find churches, mosques, *gurudwaras*, and synagogues far from home.

In recent years, the major faiths have built up a sizable Web presence. Catholics, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, and the myriad Orthodox and Protestant denominations are firmly ensconced in the haven of absolute religious freedom that is the Net. The Vatican has its own Internet country code (*.va*); even the technophobic Amish can be found hawking butter churns at the **Amish General Store [amishgeneralstore.com]**. Multifaith sites such as **Beliefnet [beliefnet.com]** and **OurFaiths.org Religion Communities [ourfaiths.org]** have their share of "loyalists"—people who hold passionately to the faith in which they were raised—but also cater to seekers of all sorts. The religion communities on Yahoo!, America Online, and MSN boast thousands of members chatting not only about mainstream beliefs but also about such esoteric subjects as Cao Dai, fire walking, and Umbanda. If all of that sounds a bit serious, the Web being what it is, there are plenty of quirkier pews—for example, the **Virtual Church of the Blind Chihuahua [dogchurch.com]** and the **First Online Church of "Bob" [www.modemac.com]**—that claim devoted followings.

Although there is no shortage of welcome mats for potential believers, the purpose of most visitors is more to find fellowship than to be converted. This was especially apparent in the wake of the attacks. Many religion sites saw a jump in traffic during the days that followed, as people sought solace, shared their grief, and offered prayers.

The message boards at **SikhNet [sikhnet.com]** were filled with outrage, especially over the murder in Arizona, within a week of the tragedy, of a Sikh who had been mistaken for a Muslim. Meanwhile, at **CBN.com: The 700 Club [cbn.com]**, Pat Robertson explained that the attacks happened "because God Almighty is lifting His protection" from America, which has focused on "the pursuit of health, wealth, material pleasures, and sexuality," allowing "rampant pornography on the Internet."

But many sites were busy building spiritual bridges instead of roadblocks. OurFaiths suggested that members invite a Muslim to dinner. Beliefnet encouraged visitors to add their prayers to "an extraordinary multifaith prayer circle," and within 48 hours an estimated 1,500 people had heeded the call.

The Net is certainly not about to replace the intimacy of traditional churches, or their "on-the-ground" faithful. It's no wonder that **IslamiCity [islamicity.com]**, which caters to "the Global Muslim eCommunity," carries a disclaimer on its Webcasts: "In our opinion, you can't perform your prayers as if you were in the congregation along with these prayer broadcasts. Please join the prayers at your local mosque and watch these programs during other times."

Yet religion has thrived in the virtual world. "The World Wide

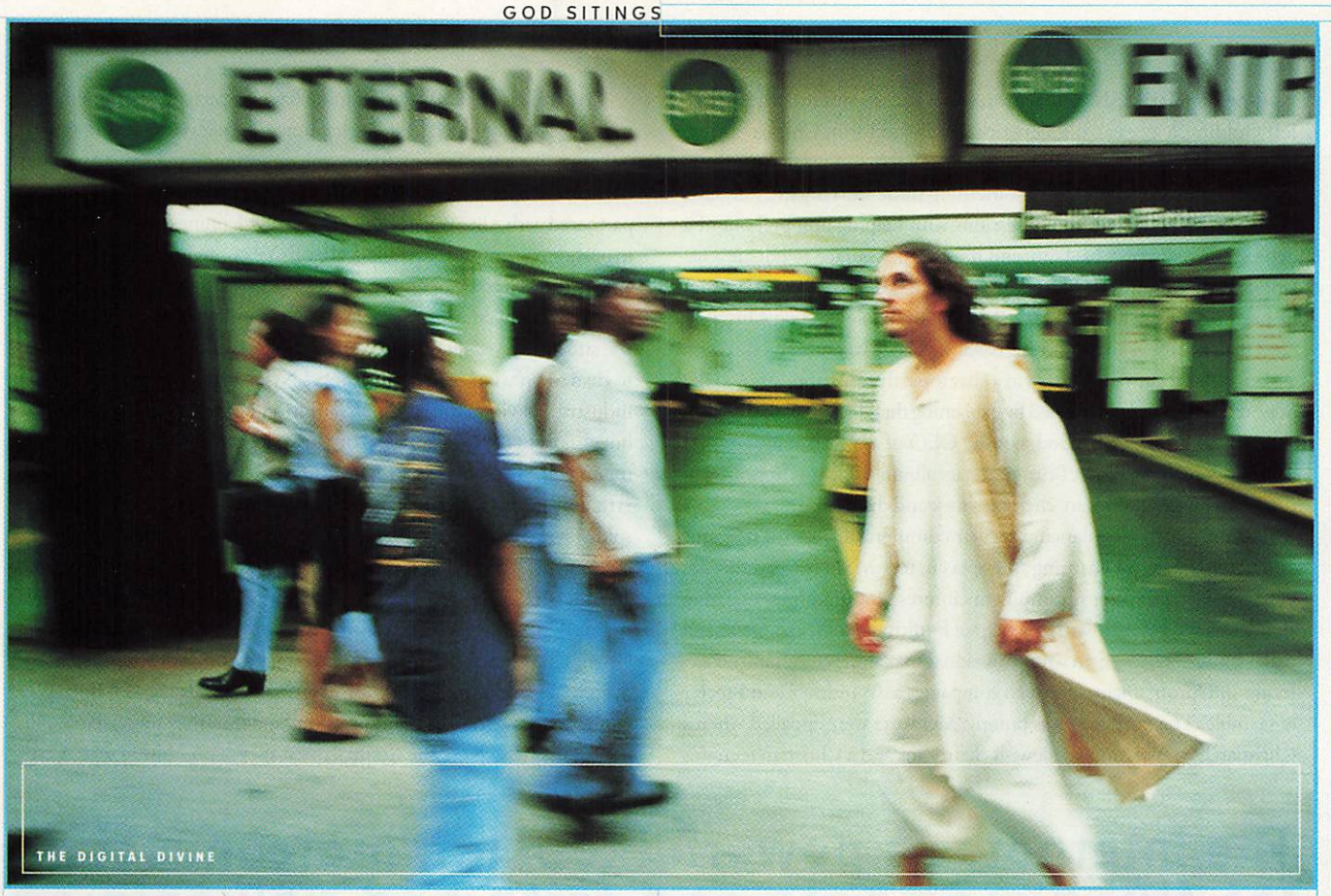
Religion Online From A to Z

AMISH
National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom [holycrosslivonia.org/amish]
It would be against the Amish way of life for believers to actually have a Web site, so others do it for these low-tech types.

ATHEIST AND AGNOSTIC
The Secular Web [infidels.org]
The mission of the Internet Infidels is to promote the view that "our natural world is all that there is, a closed system in no need of an explanation."

BAPTIST
American Baptist Churches USA [www.abc-usa.org]
Lots of links to resources and reports, as well as live Webcasts of the organization's meetings.

BUDDHISM
Buddhanet.net [buddhanet.net]
The World Buddhist Directory is handy for finding, say, meditations and teachings in Tasmania. Highly recommended, even (or especially) for non-Buddhists: the Loving-Kindness Meditation.



THE DIGITAL DIVINE

Web can't really take one into the inner sanctum of religious groups or the hearts and minds of those who believe," writes sociology professor Jeffrey K. Hadden at **The Religious Movements Homepage @ The University of Virginia [religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu]**. "But without question, anyone who chooses can get much closer to scores of religious movements than has ever before been possible....It's a great learning laboratory."

It's also a powerful tool for interconnecting far-flung members of a faith and galvanizing them into action—sometimes with historic results. Such was the case in 1997 when several leaders of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America opposed the archbishop. These "contras" launched a Web site, **Voithia [voithia.org]** (the word *voithia* is Greek for "seeking God's help"), which disseminated their arguments to church members and the media. The effort helped put pressure on the patriarch in Constantinople, and the archbishop was replaced in 1999. "What we're seeing," says OurFaiths' Lynne Bundesen, "is the democratization of religion through the World Wide Web. The implication is nothing short of the complete reorganization of all traditional religions."

Bundesen ought to know. Before founding OurFaiths last year, she designed the first religious chatrooms for Prodigy and spent five years as webmaster for MSN's religion communities. When she started at Prodigy in 1993, various groups flamed one another so often on the Religion Bulletin Board that Armageddon threatened to erupt daily. "It was an absolute mess," Bundesen recalls. "Not a civil word anyplace—witches and Christians screaming at each other, which you might expect, but then you even had Buddhists threatening to sue other Buddhists!"

Bundesen's idea was to create a "sacred space" inside which people could speak freely, as long as they abided by a kind of Internet Ten Commandments. "Thou shalt not proselytize" was high on the list; the rest boiled down to a do-unto-others ethic. Bundesen was also careful to use formal names and terms that would convey respect, and she separated the "text-based" Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) from the "multitext" spiritual believers, who generally adhere to a broader set of principles and are opener to alternative ideas.

This format proved wildly popular, and its success was repeated at MSN, where by 1999 the religion communities were logging a million hits a month. At times, 150 members a minute visited the Islam chatroom. Prayer circles were credited with curing cancer and other ills.

STYLING: LAURIE SCHECHTER; GROOMING: TOM DEROSA

Zen [www.do-not-zzz.com]
If you're in the mood for a little Shockwave meditation, enter here. A mellow mind trip.

CATHOLIC
Catholic.net [catholic.net]
Leading Catholic periodicals, encyclicals, and devotional services in a streamlined format.

CHRISTIAN (GENERAL)
Gospel Communications Network [gospelcom.net]
A huge and devoted audience makes this alliance of online Christian ministries one of the top religion sites on the Web. Download daily devotionals into your PDA and shop at the 29-store Christian mall.

SermonCentral.com [sermoncentral.com]
Search by keyword, chapter and verse, or topic for that perfect message. More than 30,000 free sermons, illustrations, and outlines available.

Talking Bible [talkingbible.com]
Push "continuous play" to hear the King James version of the New Testament read straight through, chapter by chapter, using RealPlayer.

CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST
The Church of Christ, Scientist [tfccs.com]
Q&A and publications about the church Mary Baker Eddy founded in 1879 to return to "primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing."

FALUN GONG
Falun Dafa Clearwisdom.net [clearwisdom.net]
With no official "church," this site comes closest to

One popular MSN destination was a Judaic-studies chat, where Jeff Golding, a 37-year-old network administrator in Chicago, began tuning in on Sunday nights to learn about his roots. "I was looking for a sense of spirituality and to get something more into my life," he says. He credits the insightful study sessions with helping him pull out of a depression, rediscover his faith, and muster the courage to pursue a relationship. He eventually became a chatroom host himself, and last year he met, through an online personal ad, the woman who is now his wife.

That's not to say that the going has always been smooth. At one point, a Microsoft executive suggested as a chat topic the question, "Should the pope retire?" (Bundesen replied by explaining that devout Catholics view the pope as "ordained by God, not the CEO of a big corporation.") At another point, an ad for a Britney Spears album somehow appeared in the Islam Sisters chatroom, eliciting shock and disbelief.

And if you think balancing secular commercialism with religious sanctity is tough, try ensuring free speech, too. MSN learned this the hard way last year after revamping its interest communities—ousting Bundesen and others—with the help of **Participate.com**, a software and management services firm whose mission is to convert community chatrooms into profit engines for such companies as Whirlpool and Procter & Gamble. The transition was bumpy: Members were appalled when a Christian host took over the Jewish chatrooms and a Christian teen was asked to run the gay/lesbian room. Hackers harassed and threatened hosts, reportedly e-mailing them pornography and computer viruses.

Although many religious sites have rules of conduct, they're hard—if not impossible—to enforce without posting knowledgeable gatekeepers in every chatroom and on every message board. A recent visit to Yahoo!'s Islam, Catholic, and Buddhist chats found a deluge of profane and racist rants (in the Islam room, "You pissed us off now prepare to die scumbags" was a relatively benign comment).

"As you can imagine, removing abusive messages is a daunting task," says Mohammed Abdul Aleem, CEO of IslamiCity. "We have to be careful and monitor some free-form discussions so we don't actually inflame what is already out there. It's a very delicate situation, whether it's coming from Muslims or non-Muslims." His site began vetting posts a week after the September 11 terrorist attack, when the number of non-Muslim visitors increased tenfold.

To date, it is Beliefnet that seems to have juggled conflicting demands most successfully. Indeed, the site has drawn enough unique visitors—3.9 million is the latest figure—to not only show up on the radar of Jupiter Media Metrix but also win a third round of venture capital. The site has partnered with *ABC World News Tonight* (Peter Jennings is said to be a fan) to provide content and has made deals with Yahoo! and AOL Time Warner.

In its quest to be operating in the black by August 2002, Beliefnet is unabashedly commercial. Banner ads pop up on most pages, and the site links to religious tomes, music, herbs, and other items for sale to cash in on what cofounder Robert Nylen estimates is a $40 billion industry. He views the commercialization not as a conflict of interest but almost as the perpetuation of a great legacy—that is, if you're willing to trace the origins of capitalism to Catholic monasteries in the 11th and 12th centuries. "If we kept ourselves in a little, tiny box and sold only rosary beads and yarmulkes," Nylen says, "it would be boring."

Alongside spiritual quizzes and interviews with such celebrities as Bono and Christy Turlington (which produce traffic spikes of up to 10,000 hits in a day), the site hosts columnists—Margot Adler, Dan Wakefield, and Gregg Easterbrook, for instance—ruminating on provocative subjects: Strip Malls vs. Sacred Spaces, Born-Again Hindus, Is Heaven Boring?

"We give people the comfort of the tradition they understand, plus the security to explore the spiritual quest they're on," Nylen says. A typical quester is Sunergia, a stressed-out mother and student whose message-board post, "Big Questions," zeroes in on the issue that haunts all seekers yearning to fill that spiritual void: "Why do people have religious convictions? What does a person do with the dogma?" Her query is a plaintive cry in the virtual wilderness, and it elicits dozens of responses.

The Internet is a powerful tool for interconnecting far-flung members of a faith and galvanizing them into action—sometimes with historic results

So who *are* all these people channeling their spirituality through cyberspace? Are they teachers pointing the way to enlightenment? Are they lost souls who need to get a life? In fact, they're both—and everything in between. Some are perpetual seekers, surfing for a sign. Others look only for affirmation of their beliefs. They are all experts in their own right, free to fill their heads (or the heads of others) with ideas that range from brand-new to thousands of years old, an infinite and ongoing progression of religious riffs and spiritual rants. Though faceless and ephemeral, the communities they have built are real—and connect seekers to, if not transcendence, then something they feel will get them a little closer to it.

being the most authoritative. Learn about branches, and monitor human-rights abuses in China.

HINDU
The Hindu Universe [hindunet.org]
The world's oldest religion has many sites on the Web, but this one is packed with perhaps the most information. Lively message boards, too.

JAIN
Jain History: An Outline [www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/jainh.html]
This ancient religion that has its roots in India has no official Web site, but this page can get you started with an overview and links.

JEWISH
Jewish Torah Audio [613.org]
Features more than 600 hours of Jewish multimedia, which the site claims is "the first worldwide Jewish audio since Mount Sinai."

Shamash: The Jewish Network [shamash.org]
A list of hundreds of Jewish resources on the Net, links to divrei torah (commentaries), and, best of all, a kosher restaurant finder.

LUTHERAN
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [elca.org]
Perhaps the most thorough Protestant site on the Web, with church history, time lines, and LutherLink online discussions.

METHODIST
UMC.org: United Methodist Church [umc.org]

PLAYING GOD

The Net is the antidote to fundamentalism, forcing us to look more deeply at our beliefs and to challenge the stories of the past

I saw a bumper sticker on a minivan in Wisconsin last week that read: "In case of rapture, this car will be empty!" I suppose that means that *my* car shall remain occupied. But I am less troubled by the supposed inevitability of my damnation than the delight with which those Milwaukee passengers seemed to be anticipating Armageddon. They're looking forward to the apocalypse!

This is what happens when people take the stories their religions offer a bit too literally. Sure enough, the narratives of the Bible, like those of many other religious texts, tell a version of the history of the human race—from God's creation of the universe, through the life and death of a messiah, right on to the end of everything and the tallying of the score. In that paradigm, if you subscribe to the right story and follow the rules, all you have to do is hang in there and wait for the ending, and you'll be saved. Best of all, the real quandaries of human existence—questions such as where do we come from, what is the right way to live, and where do we go when we die—are all preordained. A closed book.

BY DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF

But these kinds of stories were developed back before the days of interactive media. When you're part of a captive, passive audience without keyboards or even joysticks, the only way out of a story is to wait. You have to accept the storyteller's solution because it's the only one being told in your tribe—either that, or reject the story altogether and risk damnation. This was the sad fate of poor infidels like me until pretty recently. Thanks to the Internet, we now have a way out of the story: We can write our own endings.

The interactive medium is, at its core, an invitation to talk back. The online world is one in which we are entitled to voice our own opinions, however much they might contradict the status quo. We are challenged to reflect on the stories we're being told, even create our own versions—and our own sacred truths.

What a terrific weapon the Internet gives us against extreme fundamentalism. And just in time. We're now facing religion's darkest implications, violence done by true believers blindly following the unilateral decrees of their leaders. For fundamentalists are sim-

From administrative matters such as church finances to bulletin boards and links to gift shops, this site covers a lot of ground.

MORMON

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [lds.org]
The Mormons go all out with an extensive Gospel library—even for handhelds—live streaming instrumental music, self-help essays for building a strong family, daily news updates, and prepackaged story ideas for lazy journalists.

MULTIFAITH

Beliefnet [beliefnet.com]
The largest and most successful multifaith site has discussion boards, meditations, prayer circles, quizzes, and contemporary columnists.

OurFaiths.org Religious Communities [ourfaiths.org]
The latest product of religion site innovator Lynne Bundesen (see story, page 99), this nonprofit provides a safe place for people of various faiths to interact.

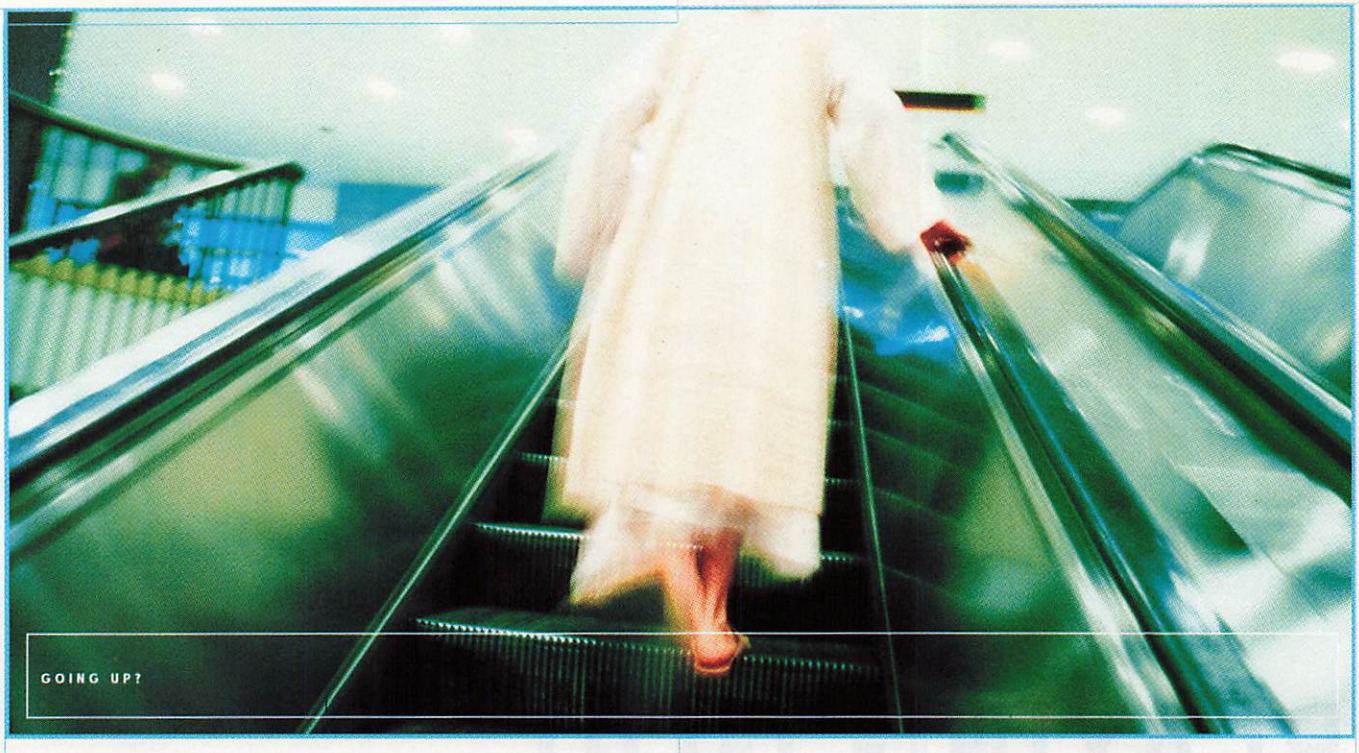
MUSLIM

Islamic Web Guide [islamicwebguide.com]
A summary of Web sites that present "true" Islam, available in many languages.

IslamiCity [islam.org]
Catch up on the news from around the world, chat, post classifieds, and find a mosque.

PRESBYTERIAN

Presbyterian Church (USA) [pcusa.org]
Basic info on the church and congregations.



GOING UP?

ply people who insist that their religion's narrative become everyone else's literal truth.

Interactive media tends to loosen up those fixed narratives by allowing users to contribute their own ideas to the story. Try giving a sermon in an AOL chatroom or a list of commandments on the *Yahoo! Internet Life* bulletin boards. The people you're preaching to won't remain silent—at all. The ministers I know who have taken their messages online have had to reassess their roles as mediators of faith and accept new ones as partners in spiritual learning. When religion is practiced on the Internet, participants quickly realize that we're all in this together.

The Internet undermines the blind obedience of fundamentalism by offering alternative points of view, promoting pluralism, and encouraging feedback. Not that this concept is all that new. While the fundamentalist priests of ancient Israel sacrificed animals on the altar, those interested in hypertext were sitting around a table arguing together as they wrote the Talmud. While fundamentalist Muslims were declaring their first holy wars, liberals in old Baghdad were sharing wine and finding common ground with similarly inclined Christians and Jews.

Today the Internet deconstructs the narratives that religions use to explain the world, while inviting people from every race and culture to participate in the conversation. No wonder fundamentalists are upset.

HOLY GHOST IN THE MACHINE

In this context, the entire personal computing revolution starts to look like a new sort of spiritual movement. Is it coincidental that these technologies were developed in California's Bay Area, the breeding ground for alternative spiritual practices? Or that the first easily networkable personal computer was conceived by a practicing Buddhist, Steve Jobs? And Jobs didn't call it an Apple for nothing. The personal computer was the forbidden fruit—a way of accessing the Tree of Knowledge, and an affront to those who would sequester any information from the formerly little people. Thanks to the geek, the meek would indeed inherit the earth.

In the beginning, however, darkness was on the face of the water. The realms of computing and, even more so, networking were unfamiliar turf. They were hard to navigate, and harder still to design. It's no wonder that many Silicon Valley firms were forced to rely on the skills of many strange young members of the counterculture, rebels who—like Moses, Buddha, Jesus, and the Prophet Mohammed—saw a new and radically different way of bringing people together to understand the world.

Those of us lucky enough to get online in the early years were struck by how plastic, fluid, and malleable the digital world could be. Online communities have no real form—they are the ever-changing consensus reality of their members. One's value **continued on 136**

QUAKER
The Religious Society of Friends [quaker.org]
Find historical Quaker meetinghouses and peruse writings by "historical Friends."

SIKH
SikhNet [sikhnet.com]
News, chat, a matchmaking service, Sikhnet Radio, and MP3 files of the Sikh holy scripture.

TAOIST
Center of Traditional Taoist Studies [tao.org]
Created by one of the largest private Taoist temples in the world, this site is dedicated to the philosophical teachings of Lao Tzu.

UNITARIAN
Unitarian Universalist Association [uua.org]
Links to church Web sites, plus basic reading lists and news from the UU perspective.

WICCAN AND NEO-PAGAN
Covenant of the Goddess [cog.org]
This international organization of autonomous Wiccan congregations and solitary practitioners features information about the CoG and its activities, as well as religious beliefs and practices.

ZOROASTRIAN
Vohuman.org [vohuman.org]
This site promotes information on "the Good Religion of Prophet Zarathushtra" and contains helpful links for adherents.

FOR AN EXPANDED VERSION OF THIS LIST, GO TO YIL.COM/RELIGION

PHOTO: MICHAEL McLAUGHLIN; STYLING: LAURIE SCHECHTER; GROOMING: TOM DeROSA

BY MARY ELIZABETH WILLIAMS

TAKING COMMUNION

What do we chat about when we chat about God? Revelations from a longtime message board host

Early in my tenure as the host of Table Talk, the member forum of **Salon.com**, I laid down a challenge: "When somebody proves or disproves the existence of God here, e-mail me." I had found myself in a heated debate between atheists and ardent believers. For a while I watched silently as both sides argued with equal vigor, occasionally stooping to insult one another but mostly just relishing the rhetoric. After I'd fired off my salvo, the conversants didn't miss a beat, proof that the most disparate groups can share common ground—even if it's just for the love of a good brawl.

The first rule of polite modern society is that you never discuss religion in mixed company. The first rule of Net society is that the old rules don't apply. What's verboten across a dinner table is de rigueur online. Here one can go nose-to-nose with fanatics and doubters, with people looking to get into Buddhism or out of Mormonism. Some are hoping for a chorus of amens; others are just spoiling for a fight. It turns out that the ephemeral world of Net community is the perfect place to wrestle with the ephemeral issues of spirituality.

Ironically, the same anonymity that makes the Net so ripe for perusing porn makes it even better for finding God. Offline, sex is as near as the next perfume ad or casual chat about the side effects of Viagra. Religion—when not wrapped in the guise of some supermodel's latest mystical diversion—is practically taboo. The same instinctive impulse toward privacy that impels Catholics to recite their confessions behind a literal screen leads Netizens to do it behind a virtual one.

We can say aloud, as some have on Table Talk, that "Christianity's God is sadistic and cruel." Or we can, as others have there, attest to the power of prayer. We can get a few things off our chests and allow Christians and atheists to rant at each other. Try doing the same at a company picnic and see how far you get. My own father-in-law, a liberal Protestant minister, regularly wanders into other chatrooms and mixes it up furiously with conservative Christians. Offline, he's the model of Wasp decorum. But sit him in front of a computer monitor and he turns into a pugnacious, Scripture-quoting foe of born-again rhetoric. He gets something on the Net that, despite his profession, he can't find anywhere else.

I think of him often when I'm cruising around my own online community, pondering whether the fervor of the words I see is matched by a similar offline restraint. Because we're not strictly a spirituality site, we attract a different clientele than the likes of **Beliefnet [beliefnet.com]**. Here, we're as likely to find skeptics as seekers. I wonder if some of our more outspoken members are the flip side of my father-in-law—missionaries seeking converts, or just people so isolated in their beliefs that they feel they have nowhere else to express them. Who cares if we go around in circles forever, chasing solutions that we never seem to find? The freedom just to talk is intoxicating enough.

It can, of course, get rough—at times, downright ugly. Throw a little politics into the mix (with religion, it's hard not to) and the combination is positively explosive. I've seen conversations on Holocaust revisionism, gays in the ministry, and prayer in schools turn so nasty so fast that it could convince you there's no benevolence left anywhere in the universe. Out of necessity, over the years we evolved clear-cut posting guidelines so material suggesting that "You Jews...are racist murderers" (from a discussion called "Israel: Excessive Use of Force") or that a user with a different outlook must therefore "molest cats" isn't tolerated. But even when users stick to the letter of the rules, they still manage to rile each other up. I've seen people who would otherwise cross the street to avoid each other entwine themselves and not let go, usually while announcing firmly that they are absolutely not going to pay any more attention to each other. Telling someone to "come back when you've grown up" is about the surest way to keep him subscribed to a thread. This is no place for the easily offended or intimidated.

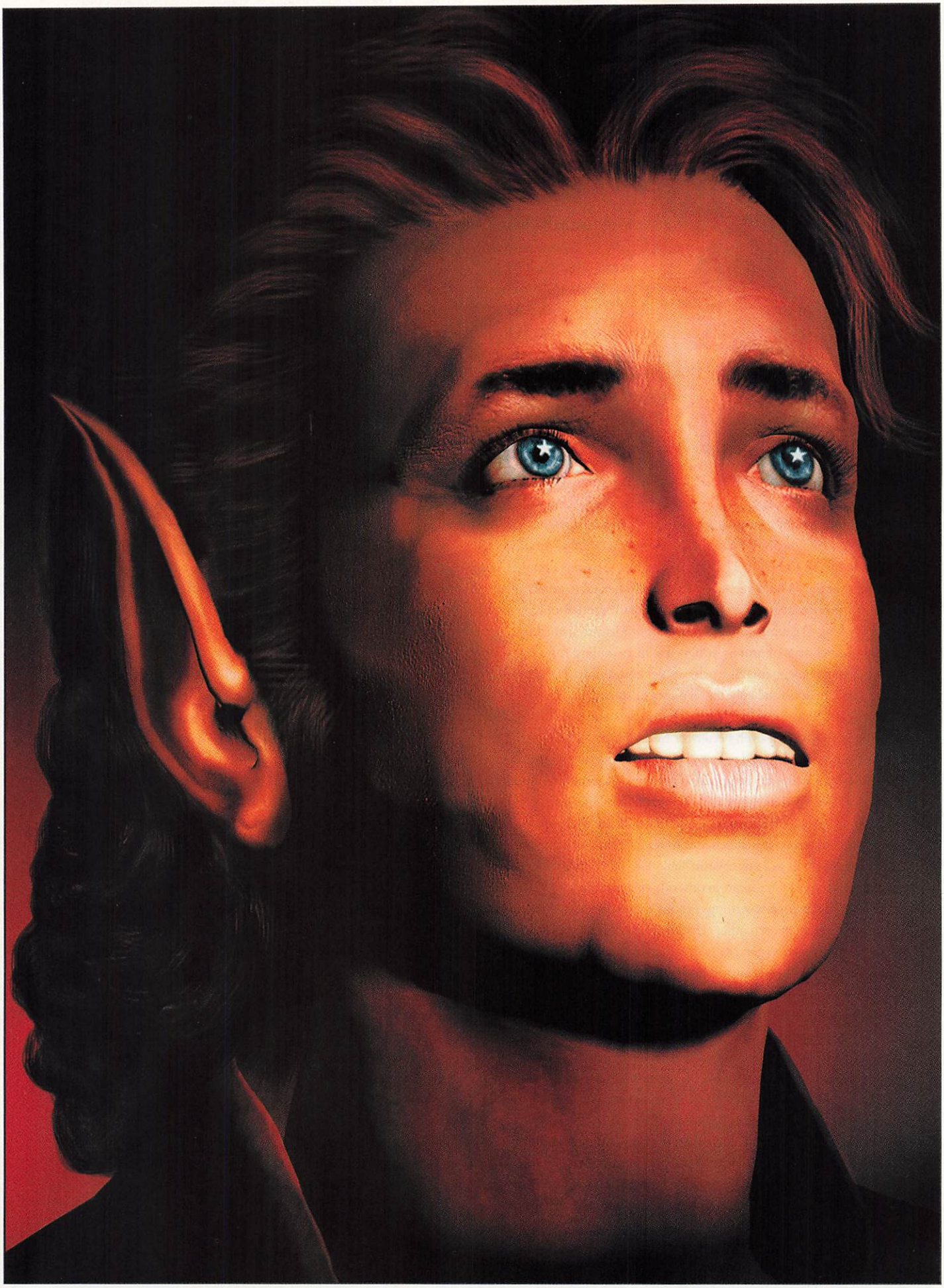
But it is a place to seek, if not heavenly transport, at least a little earthly joy. I've watched people of all persuasions offer one another a "mazel tov" or "blessed be" at a shared celebration. I've watched them crack wise on the origin of holidays—suggesting that the bas mitzvah was invented by "the American Catering and Shindig Association" or refuting Halloween's satanic connotation by noting, "Gosh, I can't remember the last time I sacrificed a baby at a Halloween party."

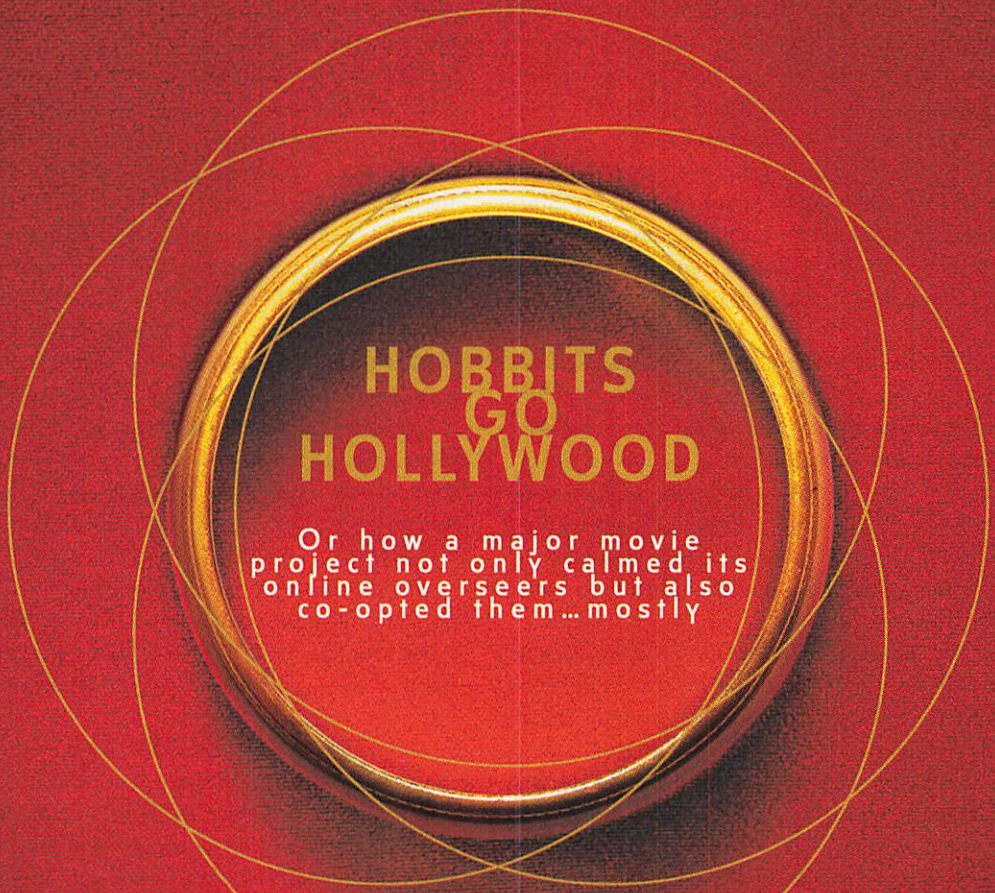
In moments of far greater weight, the Net community can be the place to find human nature at its best. After the terrorist attacks on the U.S. in September, people struggling to make sense of random cruelty and personal tragedy turned to one another, often through the prism of their creeds. "I'm holding you all in my prayers today," was a common refrain, while others observed, "This is why I hate organized religion: 'My God can beat up your God.'"

Not much ever gets resolved (perhaps the closest we've ever come to a consensus on Table Talk was in a discussion called "Nobody ever changed their mind on the Internet"). But what might seem exasperating about theological discussions is also what's thrilling about them. We all share a bit of faith: faith that someone will say something that will keep us coming back; faith that the information cited is accurate; faith that the person who claims to be an ex-priest or a Holocaust survivor really is. Whether or not we believe in an unseen higher power, we all have to believe at least a little in one another—it's what makes us care enough to keep arguing.

Years after I told the members of my community to e-mail me if they reached a verdict on the existence of God, I still haven't received a reply. But the believers and the doubters are still in there, searching. The only thing that's certain is that they always will.

Mary Elizabeth Williams is the host of Salon.com's Table Talk discussion forum and a regular contributor to *Y-Life*.





HOBBITS GO HOLLYWOOD

Or how a major movie project not only calmed its online overseers but also co-opted them...mostly

The Lord of the Rings is the Rodney Dangerfield of modern literature: a great entertainer that's been hugely influential and enjoyed several periods of mass popularity, but gets no respect. Though written by an Oxford philologist, the classic fantasy epic—which follows the struggle of the hobbit Frodo Baggins to destroy the evil One Ring—has never been canonized in the same way *Moby Dick* and *Ulysses* have. Without that backbone of scholarly support, *The Lord of the Rings* has had to rely on a core of devotees to keep its reputation alive rather than being able to count on a long line of professors expounding its merits. Written by J.R.R. Tolkien, whose vast knowledge of ancient myth and lifelong fascination with creating his own languages imbue it with an eerie verisimilitude, the tale has been embraced twice since its publication in the mid-1950s—first by hippies scribbling "Frodo lives!" on college walls, and later by the sci-fi/geek/Society for

ILLUSTRATION BY CATHARINA HARDERS

BY ANGELA GUNN

Creative Anachronism crowd that, oh yeah, also built the Internet.

What the intelligentsia shunned, the Net has revered. And now, with the mainstream camped out on Tolkien's doorstep (thanks to director Peter Jackson's three-year, three-picture, $270 million adaptation of the beloved books), the Net natives who have kept the torch burning all these years feel empowered—nay, entitled—to dictate how the flame will be kept. Amazingly enough, Jackson appears to have convinced online Tolkien buffs to trust him with their precious story. How he was able to walk the fine line between pleasing his studio and appeasing the hard-core provides an invaluable case study (if not a Rosetta stone) for future directors looking to capitalize on the Net's extensive but notoriously prickly fan communities. Herewith are the rules of engagement for those who would attempt this most treacherous of paths.

RULE 1 PICK A WINNER. Proving itself preternaturally compatible with the mind-set of the Net's early explorers, Middle-earth became cyberspace's premier shared hallucination—analyzed, immortalized, and expanded upon—on Web sites, in server names...you name it. MUDs (text-based multiuser domains) simulate life in the lands: adventurers skirmish, academics dissect, artists sketch, fiction writers spin new tales with familiar characters. Discussion of the text is undertaken with the gravitas of Talmudic scholars.

If you're thinking this sounds like *Star Trek* or *Star Wars* fanboy behavior, you're bringing a knife to a gunfight. Tolkien's admirers are the gold standard of obsessive, detail-driven fandom. This is in part because the writer built his "secondary universe" on top-notch linguistic and historical foundations, and in part because his world is rife with interesting little byways and domains that are only mentioned in passing—leaving plenty of room for creative homesteaders to put down roots and make Middle-earth their own.

But picking a prime piece of real estate is not enough. You're never going to feel at home there unless you make friends with the neighbors.

RULE 2 MAKE THE FANS FEEL THEY'RE MORE INSIDE THAN THE INSIDERS. In late September, Michael Regina, a Montreal-based editor on **TheOneRing.net** [for more on the Net's chief Tolkien resources, see also "Caught in Tolkien's Web," page 108], was overwhelmed by the latest in a months-long series of *LOTR* trailers. This particular trailer premiered during an episode of the TV show *Angel* (with commercials around it—commercials for a commercial, yes). Maybe it was seeing it so soon after the trauma of the World Trade Center disaster, or maybe it was the fact that the trailer looked really good, but first he wept. Then he got on the site—or tried: TheOneRing was already swamped with folks looking to discuss what they had just seen. Regina switched to instant messaging and located star Elijah Wood's mom, three hours behind in Los Angeles and wondering how the trailer had turned out. Regina assured her that it looked great. And *she* assured *him* that she and her son would be watching it together later that evening.

Not every fan has access to a movie's leading man's mom (and Regina is understandably protective of their privacy), but the Net has blurred many *LOTR* boundaries—between the studio and the fans, between Tolkien neophytes and graybeards, and between the heroes of fandom past and the architects of the present movie project. For example, beloved Tolkien illustrator John Howe was contacted early in the production cycle; many of his images of Middle-earth are brought to eerie life on-screen. TheOneRing, with its "ringers" (spies) constantly buzzing near filming locations in New Zealand, became a major beneficiary of Jackson's kindly attitude toward the Net. Instead of trying to shut the site down, he allowed it (and the rest of the estimated universe of 400-plus related sites) to run major movie news scoops unmolested. When the studio found out that ringer Erica Challis had been tramping around the New Zealand filming locations, rather than arrest her, they invited her on a tour (without her camera, of course).

It's also apparent that the movie's honchos are doing more than just tolerating the fans' obsessiveness. "Executives want to know what fans think," Regina told us. "After the last trailer, for instance, they were printing out our message boards."

RULE 3 BUILD ANTICIPATION. By now, the fact that a new movie has a Web site and an online marketing campaign isn't much of a surprise. Jackson and New Line, however, realized early that the huge swarm of online fans were going to swamp whatever little official boats they floated out to promote the movie. Even before shooting began, assorted movie bigwigs were talking to **Ain't It Cool News [aintitcool.com]** and newly created fan sites. Regina says sites such as TheOneRing "handled a lot of anticipation-building over the past two years. We cover *Lord of the Rings* 24/7, but when New Line comes out with a shiny new trailer, we can't compete with that. And we wouldn't want to."

Fans who have successfully lived in Middle-earth for years have tended to take a more skeptical approach. Most of the serious participants "deplore everything there is to do with marketing," notes Beau-Kevin Morgan, a stalwart of **Elendor [elendor.net]**, a *LOTR* MUSH (multiuser shared hallucination). "But we're adults, and we realize that's the way the world goes around these days." Already Elendor has seen "hobbits come on with the name Elijah," he says. "That's part of the fluff; these people come and go." On Elendor since 1995, Morgan estimates that a serious com-

O TO BE IN MIDDLE-EARTH: THEONERING.NET'S MICHAEL REGINA CONTEMPLATES THE TOLKIEN ZEITGEIST

PRECEDING PAGE: THOM O'CONNOR; ABOVE: RON LEVINE; PROP DESIGN: JOSEPH MARINI

munity member spends at least an hour a day there. "I've been here forever," he says. "Why am I still here? I ask myself that, but I never ask myself if I should leave."

Of course, some of the moviemakers' decisions directly contradict those made by fans over the years—and that's been part of the fun. Usenet denizens have created fantasy casts for the epic, starring everyone from Sean Connery to the Muppets. [For a sampling, see "Dream Casts," page 111.] Each of *LOTR*'s casting announcements, which have come in a seemingly endless stream since 1999, was analyzed obsessively. Most of them elicited obligatory screams of rage (this *is* the Net, after all) followed by cautious optimism. By now, the fans have calmed a bit, and the consensus seems to be that the movie in progress is likely to be a credit to the Tolkien legacy. Still, it always pays to...

RULE 4 KEEP YOUR FRIENDS CLOSE; KEEP YOUR ENEMIES CLOSER. There will always be those for whom no cast will suffice. For many online fans, Tolkien's books are but a small window into a world that exists just beyond the veil, a world that must be teased out using hints and intimations in the books. These are not people likely to be content with six hours' worth of digitally enhanced celluloid.

Those at the far end of the fan spectrum have *no* faith in a movie. Purists, they ascribe to the belief that filming a written text is like choreographing a dance about architecture. Regina hears from that contingent regularly: "Hard-liners check out TheOneRing even more often than the fans do. They demand that I forward their messages to Jackson, demanding that he burn every roll of film."

Longtime Usenet chatter George Doane Freeman IV has seen them come and go: the trolls, the purists, the gamers, the fun, and the frivolous. He admits he's looking forward to the movies, though he's "not going to stand in line" à la *The Phantom Menace*. The problems he's seen with the preview material thus far fall into two types. First, and most troubling: "I don't like the mucking about with the plot and characters; it's unnecessary as far as I'm concerned. Then we find out that Peter Jackson and company think they can write dialogue as well as Tolkien. They can't."

In addition, there's the classic problem of making movies from books that have haunted the imagination for decades. "Outside my house," notes Freeman, "I can see three mountains, which are [similar to] the mountains of Moria in the books. Those are now my mental image of those mountains, and no one's going to meet that." Multiply that by 50 million readers (with 50 million divergent Tolkien fantasies) and it starts to seem prudent to think of the movies less as *The Lord of the Rings* than as *Peter Jackson's the Lord of the Rings*—better funded than the average fan creation, but still in the fold. Now all he has to do is...

RULE 5 MAKE AN ENDURING, ENTERTAINING MOVIE THAT DRAWS IN NEWCOMERS, ADDRESSES THE CONCERNS OF COMMITTED FANS, INCORPORATES MATERIAL FROM TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PAGES OF AVAILABLE TOLKIEN TEXTS, UTILIZES THOUSANDS OF ACTORS (MANY OF WHOM HAD TO BE DIGITALLY SHRUNK TO HALF-HEIGHT), AND GARNERS GOOD GROSSES FOR NEW LINE.... And then do it again in 2002 *(The Two Towers)* and 2003 *(The Return of the King)*. No problem—right, Peter? From here on out, you're on your own. Remember: The fans will be watching your every move. May the Force be...oops. Never mind.

CAUGHT IN TOLKIEN'S WEB

Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.

J.R.R. Tolkien

THE LORD OF THE RINGS
The official movie site and, as Tolkien fans have discovered, one that delivers the goods: the books, the trailers, the interviews.
lordoftherings.net

THEONERING.NET
A massive movie fan site that rivals anything official—news, interviews, and even a video show detailing the culture around Tolkien's work.
theonering.net

THE TOLKIEN ARCHIVES
Maps, artwork, sounds, plus serious stuff: essays, race histories, poetry.
tolkien-archives.com

MIDDLE-EARTH VAULT
News, editorials, and links to Middle-earth–related coverage all around the Web.
mevault.ign.com

DWARVEN
THE SEVEN DWARVEN RINGS Archives, Links, and Movie-Related Sites

RINGBEARER.ORG
A perfect one-stop shop for movie news, rumors, updates, and more.
ringbearer.org

THE TOLKIEN TRAIL
Take an interactive tour of Middle-earth and sample Ring-related games, art, music, and other Tolkienalia.
tolkientrail.com

USENET NEWSGROUPS
Where the fans are. Steel yourself and enter the fray.
alt.fan.tolkien,
rec.arts.books.tolkien

ELVEN
THE THREE ELVEN RINGS Comprehensive Reference Works

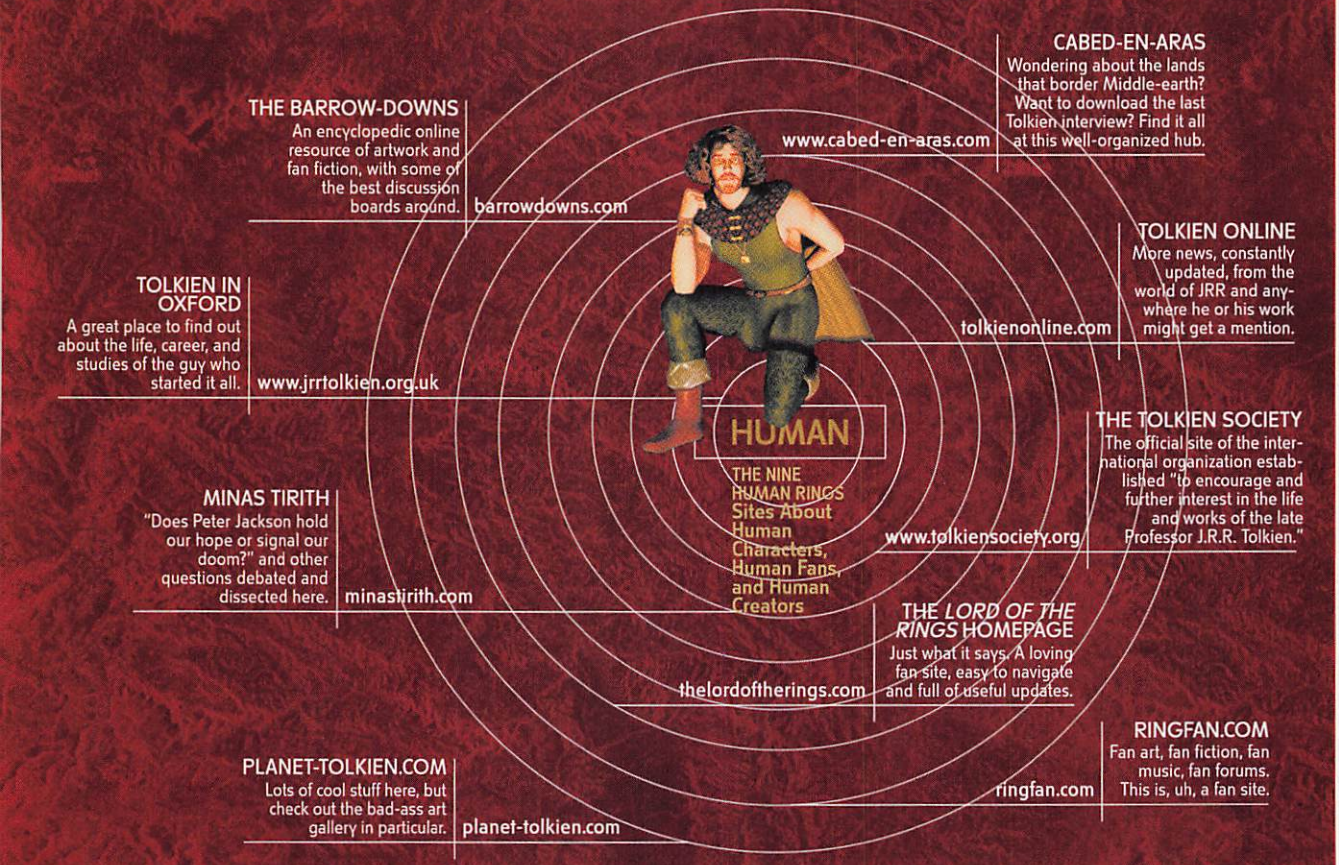
THE GREY HAVENS
"Did hobbits have pointed ears?" Well, did they?
tolkien.cro.net

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARDA
Arda was the name given by the elves to their world and all it contained. This interactive guide is the ultimate FAQ.
www.glyphweb.com/arda

MITHRANDIR'S HOUSE
A massive vault of maps, images, downloads, poems. If somebody drew it, wrote it, or spoke it, it's probably here.
www.photovault.com/Link/mithrandir/home.html

MAP (BACKGROUND): AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS; ILLUSTRATIONS: CATHARINA HARDERS; POEM FROM THE BOOK ENTITLED *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* BY J.R.R. TOLKIEN. COPYRIGHT ©1965, 1966 BY J.R.R. TOLKIEN. RENEWED 1993, 1994 BY CHRISTOPHER TOLKIEN, JOHN F.R. TOLKIEN, AND PRISCILLA M.A.R. TOLKIEN. REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Wondering where to go for your online Frodo fix? There's a mass of Ring-related sites out there. Here are the best



CABED-EN-ARAS
Wondering about the lands that border Middle-earth? Want to download the last Tolkien interview? Find it all at this well-organized hub.
www.cabed-en-aras.com

THE BARROW-DOWNS
An encyclopedic online resource of artwork and fan fiction, with some of the best discussion boards around.
barrowdowns.com

TOLKIEN ONLINE
More news, constantly updated, from the world of JRR and anywhere he or his work might get a mention.
tolkienonline.com

TOLKIEN IN OXFORD
A great place to find out about the life, career, and studies of the guy who started it all.
www.jrrtolkien.org.uk

HUMAN
THE NINE HUMAN RINGS
Sites About Human Characters, Human Fans, and Human Creators

THE TOLKIEN SOCIETY
The official site of the international organization established "to encourage and further interest in the life and works of the late Professor J.R.R. Tolkien."
www.tolkiensociety.org

MINAS TIRITH
"Does Peter Jackson hold our hope or signal our doom?" and other questions debated and dissected here.
minastirith.com

THE *LORD OF THE RINGS* HOMEPAGE
Just what it says. A loving fan site, easy to navigate and full of useful updates.
thelordoftherings.com

RINGFAN.COM
Fan art, fan fiction, fan music, fan forums. This is, uh, a fan site.
ringfan.com

PLANET-TOLKIEN.COM
Lots of cool stuff here, but check out the bad-ass art gallery in particular.
planet-tolkien.com

MORDOR: THE LAND OF SHADOW
The emphasis here is on "dark"—as in dark images, dark characters, and the dark lord, Sauron.
thelandofshadow.com

ONE RING
THE ONE RING
The Creepiest Tolkien Site Out There

VENI, VIDI, VIGGO

The Net's abuzz, Hollywood's breathless, and everybody's in line. But Viggo Mortensen—Aragorn—isn't ready to lose his cool over *The Lord of the Rings*

VIGGO: WHAT, ME WORRY?

After years of speculation, it's finally here. It's safe to say that director Peter Jackson's three-part adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is the most anticipated film series this side of that galaxy far, far away. And, as is customary with such pop cultural moments, lots of people—fans, filmmakers, financiers—are nervous and eager. Just take a look at all the Tolkien discussion boards and newsgroups (see "Caught in Tolkien's Web," page 108). Heck, take a look at *any* newsgroup—even soc.culture.cuba appears to be looking forward to this one.

So why is Viggo Mortensen so calm? True, the hobbit Frodo Baggins (Elijah Wood) is the nominal protagonist of the *Ring* cycle, but Mortensen's character, the hero-king Aragorn, is the guy who gets to kick butt and romance Liv Tyler—he's Han Solo to Frodo's Luke. His character has been a fan favorite for years—isn't the actor concerned about whether he did the part justice? "I didn't have time to get nervous about it," he says. "The story kind of takes over, and you try to do the best job you can."

Mortensen wasn't a particularly big *Ring* geek when he first got the part (he was a last-minute replacement for Stuart Townsend). But he's been making up for it ever since, and now says that he's become keenly interested in the author and his works. Of course, how could he not, having spent a year in New Zealand helping bring Middle-earth to life? His journey of discovery will be echoed by our own, when the curtains rise on November 19 on *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the first film in the series.

Y-LIFE Did you know much about Tolkien before you signed on to do this role?

MORTENSEN No, I had not read the books. I didn't have much time to read them before I started, either. I came in at the last minute. But when I did read them, I found a lot of familiar things that Tolkien took from Nordic mythology and sagas.

Y-LIFE I heard that you showed up on the set with a copy of the 13th-century Icelandic *Völsunga Saga.*

MORTENSEN Yeah. I was on the plane to New Zealand, thinking, *God, what have I done?* Once I got off the plane, I went to the bookstore and got a copy of the *Völsunga Saga* and a couple other things that I was pretty sure I'd need. And then I had a friend send me whatever I could remember that I had on the bookshelf at home. It wasn't as if all the elements of the book were unfamiliar to me, given my [Danish] background. Tolkien even took the names of

BY BILGE EBIRI

the dwarves right out of Nordic texts.

Y-LIFE Had you checked out the fan culture around Tolkien's books?

MORTENSEN As the shoot wore on, I learned more about it. Like everybody else, I looked online to see what the fuss was about when they put the first teaser trailer out.

Y-LIFE Was it difficult playing a character that so many millions of people have envisioned for years?

MORTENSEN Not really. It would be harder to play Henry Kissinger, 'cause people have a good idea what he looks like and there are a lot of different opinions about him. I think we were pretty true to how the characters are described in the books, just in outward appearance. Also, I didn't have the weight of that, because [when we started] I didn't know that people were so into it.

Y-LIFE It's almost sacred.

MORTENSEN It is like a bible to some people. One of the reasons for that is, Tolkien managed to do something that's not very easy. A lot of people write medieval epics, or borrow from Arthurian legends, or sagas, but those are always a bit shallow because there isn't any scholarship behind [them]. He breathed new life into old material. I think that Peter Jackson, in turn, is trying to do that with Tolkien. He wants to make it live for other people.

Y-LIFE So what should we be looking for in these films? The serious geeks will start scrutinizing every line and shot, but where do you think the subtleties are?

MORTENSEN I think the spirit of the book, and the mystery of it, are there. For my part as Aragorn, he's sort of a late bloomer. He comes into his own gradually and reveals himself slowly. He probably knows as much about Middle-earth and the ring as anybody, so he has a real fear of the situation. He knows the past. In the book, Gandalf calls Aragorn the greatest traveler and huntsman of his age of the world. At the same time, I think he obviously has doubts about himself. In a sense, the whole story is about these characters overcoming their own fears and doubts.

Y-LIFE Are you familiar with the cast lists that have been circulating on the Internet for years, where fans submit their ideal casts for a movie version?

MORTENSEN That sounds interesting. Who did they want?

Y-LIFE I'll read you some of the ones they've thought about for Aragorn. David Hasselhoff.

MORTENSEN Umm, okay.

Y-LIFE Elvis, in the all-musical version.

MORTENSEN Oh, wow!

Y-LIFE Keanu Reeves.

MORTENSEN *(Silence)*

Y-LIFE Denzel Washington.

MORTENSEN I could see Denzel doing that, actually. I worked with him on *Crimson Tide.* I see him having those heroic qualities.

Y-LIFE Which character do you think audiences will identify with most in these films?

MORTENSEN When everything looks worst, the individuals in the fellowship have to find in themselves some sort of hope. They have to meet their individual challenges so that the group challenge can work. In the end, it really isn't about only Frodo, or only Gandalf, or only Aragorn, or what have you. You can be a fan of any one of the characters, but in the end I think you end up being a fan of all of them.

FACING PAGE (VIGGO): COURTESY OF NEW LINE CINEMA; STIPE: NEWSCOM; AMOS: NEWSCOM; HOPE: AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS; VAN ZANDT: NEWSCOM

DREAM CAST

The Net's Version of What Might Have Been

By Angela Gunn

Casting a what-if version of *The Lord of the Rings* has been full-contact Net sport for years, since long before the current films were announced. Some of the proposed casts are semiserious (thanks to some bubble in the collective unconscious, many of them star Sean Connery as Gandalf). Others have a more facetious bent. Consider these suggestions from **alt.fan.Tolkien**, **rec.arts.books.Tolkien**, and the discussion board at **Barrow-Downs [barrowdowns.com]** as call sheets from a parallel—and far more entertaining—universe.

THE REAL CAST

Frodo, a hobbit on a quest: Elijah Wood
Sam, his companion: Sean Astin
Gandalf, a wizard: Ian McKellen
Saruman, a mighty but corrupt wizard: Christopher Lee
Aragorn, the future king (if he lives): Viggo Mortensen
Arwen, his beloved: Liv Tyler
Galadriel, an elf queen: Cate Blanchett
Gollum, Frodo's evil guide: Andy Serkis (voice)

HOBBIT! THE MUSICAL

Frodo: Michael Stipe
Sam: Dave Grohl
Gandalf: Elvis Presley
Saruman: Frank Sinatra
Aragorn: Bruce Springsteen
Arwen: Tori Amos
Galadriel: Stevie Nicks
Gollum: Sid Vicious

TOLKIEN IN TOONTOWN

Frodo: Yogi Bear
Sam: Boo-Boo
Gandalf: Bugs Bunny
Saruman: Foghorn Leghorn
Aragorn: Racer X
Arwen: Buttercup
Galadriel: Jessica Rabbit
Gollum: Zorak

THE LORDS OF STAND-UP

Frodo: Conan O'Brien
Sam: Denis Leary
Gandalf: Bob Hope
Saruman: Don Rickles
Aragorn: David Letterman
Arwen: Margaret Cho
Galadriel: Janeane Garofalo
Gollum: Sam Kinison

THE FELLASHIP OF THE RING

Frodo: Al Pacino
Sam: Steven Van Zandt
Gandalf: Marlon Brando
Saruman: Al Lettieri
Aragorn: Robert De Niro
Arwen: Jamie-Lynn Sigler
Galadriel: Lorraine Bracco
Gollum: John Cazale

THE SIMPSONS GO TO MORDOR

Frodo: Lisa Simpson
Sam: Bart Simpson
Gandalf: Bleeding Gums Murphy
Saruman: Mr. Burns
Aragorn: Homer Simpson
Arwen: Marge Simpson
Galadriel: Edna Krabappel
Gollum: Sideshow Bob

THE MUPPETS TAKE MIDDLE-EARTH

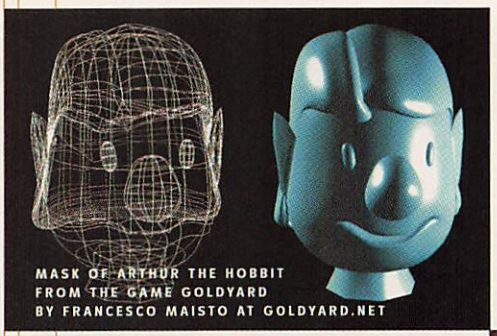
Frodo: Bert
Sam: Ernie
Gandalf: Waldorf
Saruman: Statler
Aragorn: Kermit the Frog
Arwen: Miss Piggy
Galadriel: Janice
Gollum: Animal

ONE RERUN TO RULE THEM ALL

Frodo: Jerry Seinfeld
Sam: Danny DeVito
Gandalf: Wilford Brimley
Saruman: Ricardo Montalban
Aragorn: Alan Alda
Arwen: Loretta Swit
Galadriel: Donna Reed
Gollum: Don Knotts

VOX POPULI

So what exactly are Tolkien fans saying and imagining online? A lot. Here's a sampling



MASK OF ARTHUR THE HOBBIT
FROM THE GAME GOLDYARD
BY FRANCESCO MAISTO AT GOLDYARD.NET

HE GIVES HIS RAZORED EDGE A GLOW
to note that evil lurks below.
The only other lights, the gleam
of green eyes deeper than they seem.

The cave is ugly, dark and deep.
And this Precious band I'll keep.
With miles to go before I sleep.
With miles to go before I sleep.
[Excerpt from the poem *Stopping by Caves on a Rainy Evening*—posted by "akallabeth" on Tolkien Online.]

THE WHITE TREE AND 7 STARS
FROM THE BANNER OF GONDOR
BY ALEX WHEELER
AT MIDDLE-EARTH VAULT
[MEVAULT.IGN.COM]

ARAGORN You know, Arwen, sometimes I wish I were a rock.

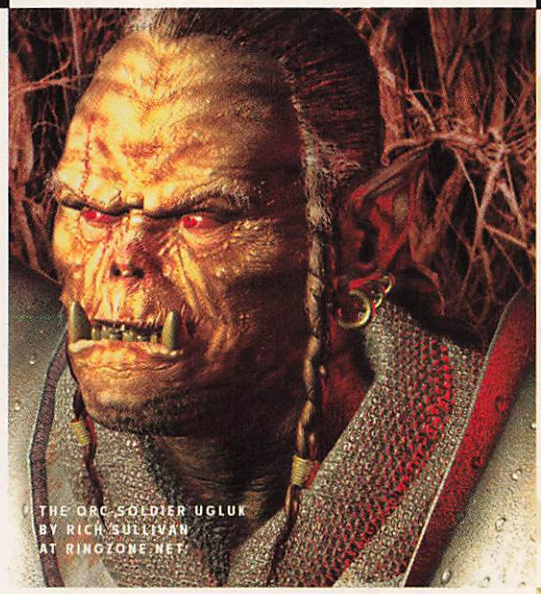
Arwen looks over at Aragorn with a smile.

ARAGORN That way I wouldn't have to deal with all this mess. With the ring...Damn it, Arwen, the ring!

Arwen seems startled but she smiles nervously.

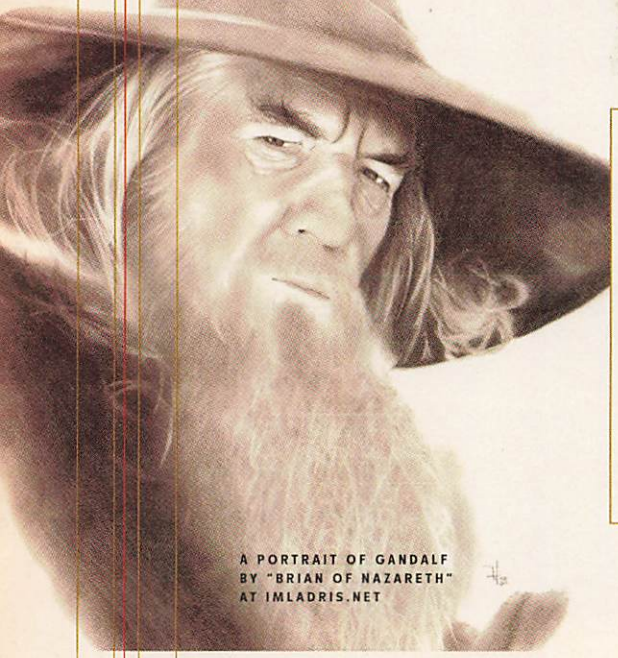
ARWEN But I wouldn't like that. If you were a rock, then...well, how would I love you?

Aragorn sighs, and stares off blankly into the night air for a long moment.
[From a fake script entry, purporting to show how Liv Tyler's character had been turned into a romantic lead, posted on the White Council, the official message board of Tolkien-Movies.com]

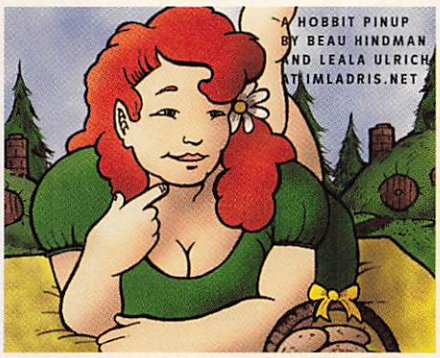


THE ORC SOLDIER UGLUK
BY RICH SULLIVAN
AT RINGZONE.NET

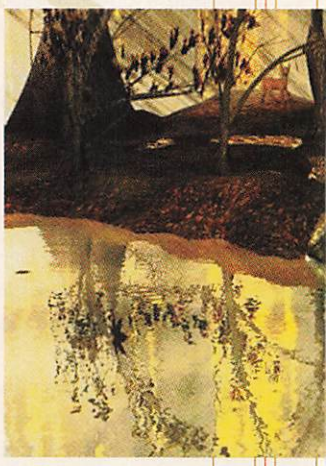
"MIDDLE-EARTH is the most important character in *LOTR*. It is not a simple "setting" or "stage."...It is what places *LOTR* far above most other works of fantastic fiction. Its themes you can find in thousands of other books, lesser or greater. But its mood, its atmosphere, and its mythic depth are unique to *LOTR* alone." [From "Gandalf's Mother," speaking on the Tolkien Online discussion boards]



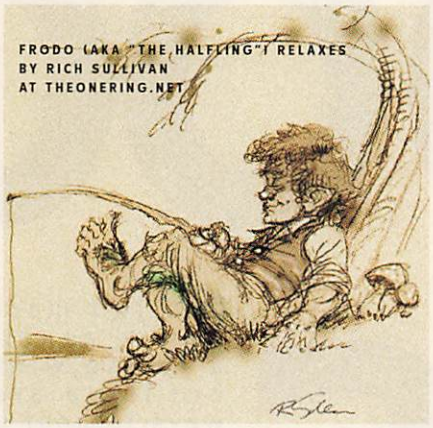
A PORTRAIT OF GANDALF
BY "BRIAN OF NAZARETH"
AT IMLADRIS.NET



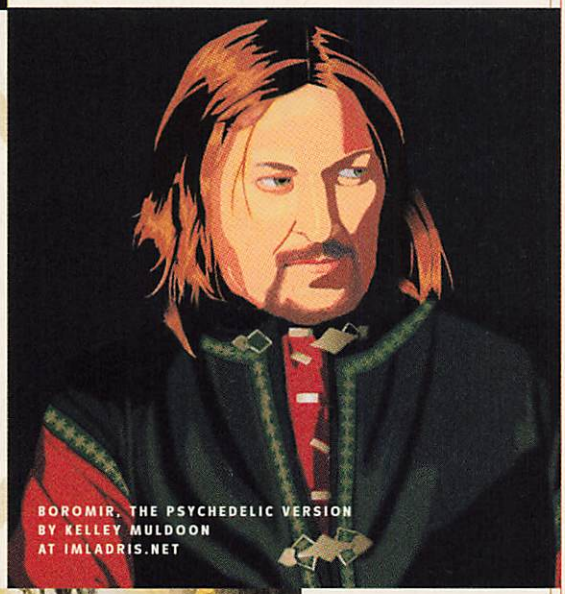
A HOBBIT PINUP
BY BEAU HINDMAN
AND LEALA ULRICH
AT IMLADRIS.NET



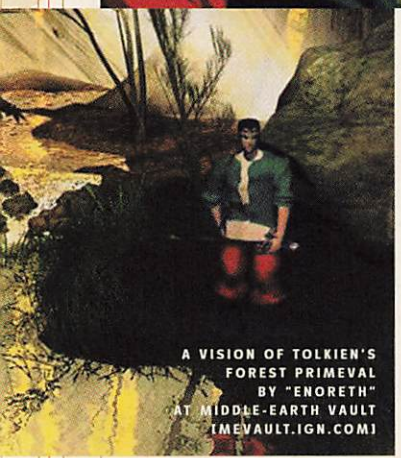
"I LIKE TOLKIEN'S FEMALE CHARACTERIZATIONS. They are, like his male characterizations, grander and higher than any real person, but...that grandeur is part of what makes that world great....We wish the real world were as pure and true as that one is." [From "Annatar," speaking on the Minas Tirith Discussion boards]



FRODO (AKA "THE HALFLING") RELAXES
BY RICH SULLIVAN
AT THEONERING.NET



BOROMIR, THE PSYCHEDELIC VERSION
BY KELLEY MULDOON
AT IMLADRIS.NET



A VISION OF TOLKIEN'S FOREST PRIMEVAL
BY "ENORETH"
AT MIDDLE-EARTH VAULT (MEVAULT.IGN.COM)

"MAYBE GOLLUM *was* schizophrenic, or perhaps the ring caused a sort of forced schizophrenia in Gollum. And I'm not just referring to Gollum's habit of talking to himself (though this kind of markedly peculiar behavior is considered a prodromal, or residual, symptom)." (from "Michael Jacobson," posting on the alt.fan.tolkien newsgroup)

WHAT *DOES* A HOBBIT LOOK LIKE?

Not sure what to make of this Middle-earth business? Let our FAQ help

Q I just woke from a long sleep. What exactly is *The Lord of the Rings*?
A A novel, a phenomenon, a way of life. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien published the first of the *Lord of the Rings* books, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, in 1954. It was followed by *The Two Towers* in 1955 and *The Return of the King* in 1956. Set in the magical land of Middle-earth, it pretty much defined the fantasy genre as we know it today. The books have been turned into a trilogy of films by New Zealand's Peter Jackson.

Q "The magical land of Middle-earth"...?
A Middle-earth is a world predating our own but located on the same planet. It includes at least four major races: elves, dwarves, humans, and hobbits, who live separately but interact for commerce and in times of trouble. For a full portrait of this land and all its peoples, check out the exhaustive **Middle-earth Tours (fan.theonering.net/middleearthtours)**.

Q Is there a plot to all of this?
A You think New Line is spending $270 million and not getting a plot out of the deal? Without getting into too much detail (lord knows there's enough to go around), you got your bad guys, you got your good guys. The bad guys are looking for a ring that's been entrusted to the main good guy, a hobbit named Frodo. If the bad guys get back the ring, the head bad guy will have the power to rule Middle-earth. To keep this from happening, Frodo undertakes a long journey to destroy the ring, advised and aided by various good folk of all races. See **Chapter Summaries of *The Lord of the Rings* (www2.arnes.si/~sudjbran/tolksumm)** for the Cliff's Notes version.

Q Doesn't that sound like every other fantasy-fiction book, movie, or board game?
A Don't blame Tolkien; he got there first. Most modern fantasy fiction, not to mention the entire world of Dungeons & Dragons and its heirs, owes its existence to these books. But Tolkien himself borrowed extensively from ancient myths and legends. Check out **The Tolkien Archives: Essays (128.173.231.55/texts.shtml)** for some of his influences.

Q What does a hobbit look like, anyway?
A About like actor Elijah Wood (who plays Frodo in the movies). Hobbits are related to humans but are only about half their height; they're fond of food, drink, and comfort, and don't go in >> 137

Bad Times Good Jobs

The job market may be as chilly as a Maine winter, but there are new ways to heat up a search. We asked a top online job-hunting guru to tell us how the Net can help advance your career

BY DON WILLMOTT

In these troubled days of economic slowdowns and big layoffs, can the Net still help you find a new job? When we want to know what's going on with online employment sites, we ask **Margaret Riley Dikel**. Her book, *The Guide to Internet Job Searching,* is a bible for job hunters who use the Internet, and her Web site, **The Riley Guide [rileyguide.com]** catalogs sites that offer listings and career advice. According to Riley, it's not as bad out there as you think. With the right strategies, the Net is still a job hunter's best friend. Here, she reveals her essential insights.

Ignore the Net at your peril.

Every major employer has some kind of recruiting presence on the Net, and even the most exclusive headhunters have gotten in on the act (check out **Korn/Ferry International [www.kornferry.com]** and **SpencerStuart.com**). Both these groups appreciate the cost savings and the speed that come with being wired. Will an online search be successful? That depends on how you define success. Job sites offer no guarantees, and no one can accurately say how many people find jobs just by posting résumés online. But maybe you use the Net to do research on an employer before an interview that you're then able to ace. Maybe you get some calls from having your résumé out there. Maybe some e-mail outreach can help you start networking. To avoid the Internet means avoiding all it has to offer in terms of its broad reach combined with its deep wells of available data. Why tie one hand behind your back?

Understand that online listings remain relatively constant.

With all the sudden layoffs of the past few months, job sites may be getting a few more résumés than usual, but they're probably getting new job postings at the same rate as always. When you see a downward trend in one area, invariably there's an upswing somewhere else. Ask yourself this: *How can I take the skills I picked up in one industry and plug them into another?* Say you're a programmer. There may not be much demand from dying dot-coms, but what about Fortune 100 oil and power companies? Think about how to make your skills transferable. Career coaches call this "walking your skills sideways."

Don't forget to check targeted job sites and local newspapers, too.

Big job sites such as **Monster.com** are essential, but if you can also find relevant targeted sites—for bankers, or bricklayers, or Iowans—so much the better. Employers turn to these sites because they want to talk to a smaller, more highly focused audience to avoid getting an onslaught of résumés. How do you find them? Start at the Riley Guide, **Job-hunt.org**, or **JobStar Central [jobstar.org]**. And by all means visit the Web sites of the local papers in the city where you want to work. Typically employers advertise there because they don't want to pay relocation costs, but you never know.

Write your résumé for the database and *then* worry about formatting it for paper and the Net.

Most employers use scanning technology, so even paper résumés end up in databases. The question isn't whether to write it for paper or for the Net: It's how to write it with the right keywords so it'll pop

up when employers are searching. Today, many people put a skills summary at the top of their résumé. The trend started with tech professionals who listed the programs and systems they knew, but it's now expanded to every industry. List the software, hardware, operating systems, and industry-specific things you know, using the phrases and jargon from your field. Read job listings to see what they're asking for and which words crop up a lot. The rest of the résumé is the descriptive stuff that backs you up once you pop up on their search. Tell what you've done and what happened when you did it. Think problem, action, resolution: Sales were slow, so you rewrote the marketing plan and boosted revenues by 10 percent. By the way, the one-page résumé rule is only for people who are right out of college or don't have much experience. The more expertise you have, the longer your résumé will be. The general rule is to max out at two pages, but never, ever pad it. For help in résumé and cover letter writing, head straight to **Susan Ireland.com: The Resume Guide [susanireland.com]**. Ireland's coaching is nothing short of phenomenal.

Go ahead and build a Web site to highlight your work, but keep it professional.

If you have graphics, writing samples, or any other kind of online-accessible work to show off, it makes good sense to assemble an online portfolio. However, attaching your résumé to your fun and wacky personal Web site is just giving employers dozens of potential reasons not to hire you. Sure it's discriminatory, but you'll never get a chance to find that out. Maybe your site reveals your sexuality, your religion, your race, or your health history. Maybe the employer won't like your haircut. If you're going to put a résumé on the Net, put it in a place that's completely away from, and doesn't link to, any personal information. Keep your professional presence professional. This goes double for college students, who make this mistake all the time.

Take advantage of everything that a job-search site offers.

Sites such as Monster.com and **HotJobs [hotjobs.com]** have all sorts of extra bells and whistles—you'll find such things as online career coaches and résumé and cover-letter storage. Yes, they're there to keep you on the site and away from others, but if the tools are good, go ahead and use them. If you find yourself responding to a lot of jobs at a given site, features such as one-button résumé forwarding will turn out to be real time-savers.

Use the Net to figure out how much money you should be making.

Most salary surveys are problematic for all sorts of statistical reasons. You're never quite sure when they were done and who's in the mix. (Say you find out that the average salary at Microsoft is $80,000. Does that include Bill Gates? Does it include the landscapers?) But **Salary.com** works really hard to provide good data. It also focuses on regional trends, which are very important to look at if you're thinking about relocating and want to know how far a Dallas dollar will go in San Francisco or New York. And don't forget about health plans and other benefits. Think of them as part of your total compensation, and include them in your negotiations.

This is the Net. Don't expect your online job hunt to be 100 percent confidential.

At Job-hunt.org, Susan Joyce has written several great articles about protecting your privacy during a job search. She says that many people believe there are managers who are just paranoid enough to hunt for disloyal employees online. It's important to keep in mind that as soon as you post a résumé on the Net, you lose a certain amount of control. This is something you're just going to have to deal with. Even if you put your curriculum vitae in a database that swears it will protect you from your employer, you put it up there so people can see it, right? The most important thing to remember is that you're in charge, and you can afford to be choosy. Look for sites that give you the guarantees you need to feel comfortable.

Remember: In the end, nothing beats good eye contact and a firm handshake.

Networking can be intimidating, but using the Net to make the first contact means they can't see you sweat—so go ahead and reach out. Mailing lists, newsgroups, chatrooms, and online associations are all fair game and should be leveraged to the max. To really develop useful networking relationships, however, you have to meet face-to-face. Try telling people in the chatroom you're using that you'll be attending the group's next meeting, and ask if anyone wants to get together. Then have that person walk you around and introduce you. You should have no qualms about using your online buddies as social props in the real world. ■

Scary Monster?

There are fewer online job sites today than there were a year ago, and those that remain are entwined in an airline-like tangle of acquisitions, mergers, and potential deals.

At the top of the heap is Monster.com—the top scorer in *Y-Life*'s August 2001 Web Lab comparison **[yil.com/goldstarjobs]**. True to its name, it has devoured some of its competitors, including the interesting **FlipDog.com**, which grabs job listings from company Web sites and consolidates them. Monster.com is also in an agreement to acquire No. 2 site HotJobs, and though it promises to continue operating all three sites separately, Margaret Riley Dikel says that if history is any indication, consolidation is all but inevitable in the long run.

Does it matter? Consolidation may actually work to the advantage of both employers and the employable. Companies looking for new recruits don't like spreading their money around. If they can work with one site rather than two or three and still get results, then why not? At the same time, job seekers (who post for free and needn't have concerns about monopolistic pricing) would rather deal with a few sites than many. Dikel also suggests that job seekers cover all their bases by checking out metasearch sites such as **CareerBuilder [careerbuilder.com]**, which search several job sites simultaneously. D.W.

Helping Hands

It's been a tough year for lots of people. Give something back online

BY JEREMY CAPLAN

In an immense outpouring of compassion and benevolence, Web surfers have been logging on in record numbers to help the victims of the terrorist attacks on America. Relief organizations and charitable groups have helped them by creating simple and productive ways for people to volunteer their services during these trying times. Here are nine ways you can lend a hand this holiday season.

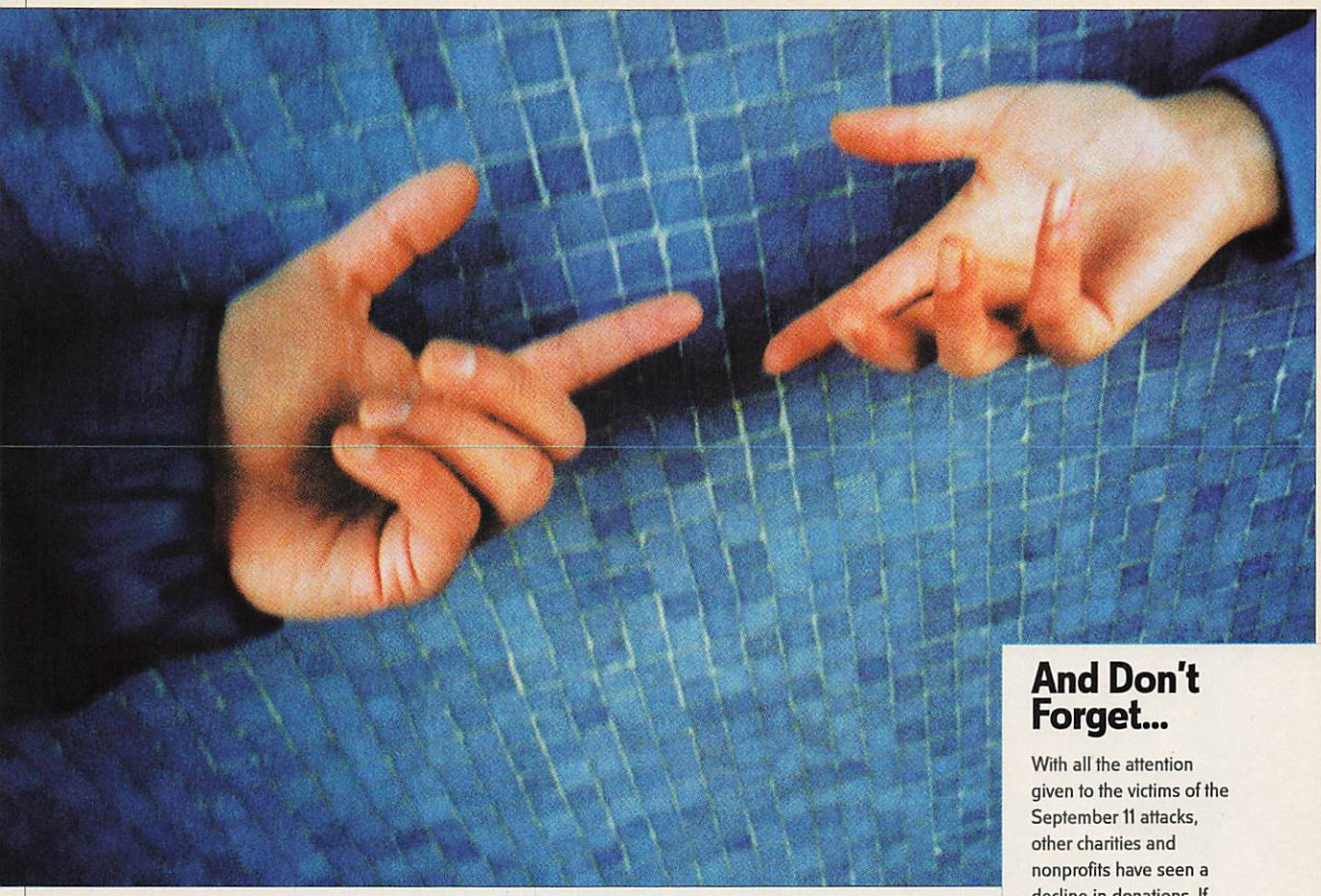
Donate to Victims' Families With only a few clicks, you can make a charitable donation to any of more than 700,000 nonprofit organizations at **Helping.org**. The site, which is supported by the AOL Time Warner Foundation, lets you make contributions to NYPD and FDNY funds anonymously (so you won't be added to mailing lists or besieged by follow-up solicitations). While many charity sites take a percentage of your gift, Helping.org passes along 100 percent of donations. The **American Liberty Partnership [libertyunites.org]**—which collected more than $100 million in the month following the terrorist attacks—and **The September 11th Fund [september11fund.org]** also collect donations directly.

Boost Soldiers' Morale Stationed thousands of miles from their spouses, children, parents, and friends, members of our armed services depend on the moral support of Americans back home. Send someone an encouraging message through **Support Our Soldiers [opsos.org]**, which connects civilians and soldiers via e-mail. Men and women in the service can also sign up at the site to receive care packages from munificent strangers.

Assist Afghan Refugees One of the world's leading humanitarian organizations is **Médecins Sans Frontières [msf.org]**, or Doctors Without Borders. It assists refugees in Afghanistan and other devastated regions of the world. You can help by making an online donation to help pay for food, blankets, medicine, and health care. You can also educate yourself about the challenges facing refugees and their caretakers so that you're better positioned to champion political steps to improve their rights and living conditions.

Support Afghan Women Women in Afghanistan have long used the Net to fight their oppressors. At the **Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan [rawa.org]**, victims of brutality relate stories of bravery in the face of tyranny. Other sites, such as the superbly designed **HelpAfghanWomen.com**, empower ordinary surfers to rally friends, classmates, or colleagues to the cause. Also click to sites such as **The Afghan Women's Mission [afghanwomensmission.org]**, where you can donate money, or **Afghan Women's Crafts [feminist.org/store/ProductAfghan.asp]**, which

ANTHONY MARSLAND/GETTYONE



sells handmade quilts, linens, wallets, and handbags—and then channels all proceeds to Afghan women in need.

Petition Against Discrimination Protest bias crimes against Muslims and Arabs in America by clicking to **ThePetitionSite.com**. If you have strong feelings about discrimination against other ethnic groups, you can create a petition through the site and encourage others to join your cause.

Auction Off Goods for Charity Americans are banding together to raise $100 million by the end of the year at **eBay: Auction for America [pages.ebay.com/auctionforamerica]**. There you can volunteer items to be auctioned off, with proceeds going to the **American Red Cross [redcross.org]**, **NYC.gov: Twin Towers Fund [nyc.gov/html/em/twintowersfund.html]**, and other charitable organizations.

Be a Role Model According to **The National Mentoring Partnership [mentoring.org]**, about 15.7 million American kids are currently seeking mentors, but only 4 million adults are volunteering at this time. **Icouldbe [icouldbe.org]** is doing its part to connect New York City youths who lost a parent in the September 11 attacks with men and women who can help fill that void by offering personal and occupational advice.

Fight Deadly Diseases By downloading and installing **Intel Philanthropic Peer-to-Peer Program [intel.com/cure]**, you can help in the research of Parkinson's disease, diabetes, and many different kinds of cancer. The program allows you to lend your PC's unused computing power to a virtual supercomputer, which performs the numerous calculations that are necessary in the fight against life-threatening diseases. The program operates when your computer is in screensaver mode, so it's not a drain on system resources. **Volunteer Your PC [members.ud.com/download/gold]** has a program that is similar to Intel's; it taps your PC's unused computing power to do research on cancer and in other areas.

Volunteer Locally or Virtually If you'd like to make yourself useful this holiday season—but don't quite know how—visit **VolunteerMatch [volunteermatch.com]**. The site can provide you with a list of volunteering opportunities in your area. The service posts info on everything from human rights groups to New York City crisis support centers. With VolunteerMatch's "virtual" volunteering program, you can help the less fortunate from the comfort of your computer. **The Virtual Volunteering Project [serviceleader.org/vv]** focuses exclusively on online volunteering services, including projects such as proofreading résumés, translating documents, and designing sites for the disabled. ■

And Don't Forget...

With all the attention given to the victims of the September 11 attacks, other charities and nonprofits have seen a decline in donations. If you'd like to help raise money for other causes, click to the Web sites of these organizations:

American Cancer Society [cancer.org]

AFB: American Foundation for the Blind [afb.org]

American Heart Association [americanheart.org]

Amnesty International On-Line [www.amnesty.org]

Children With AIDS Charity [cwac.org]

Family Literacy Foundation [read2kids.org]

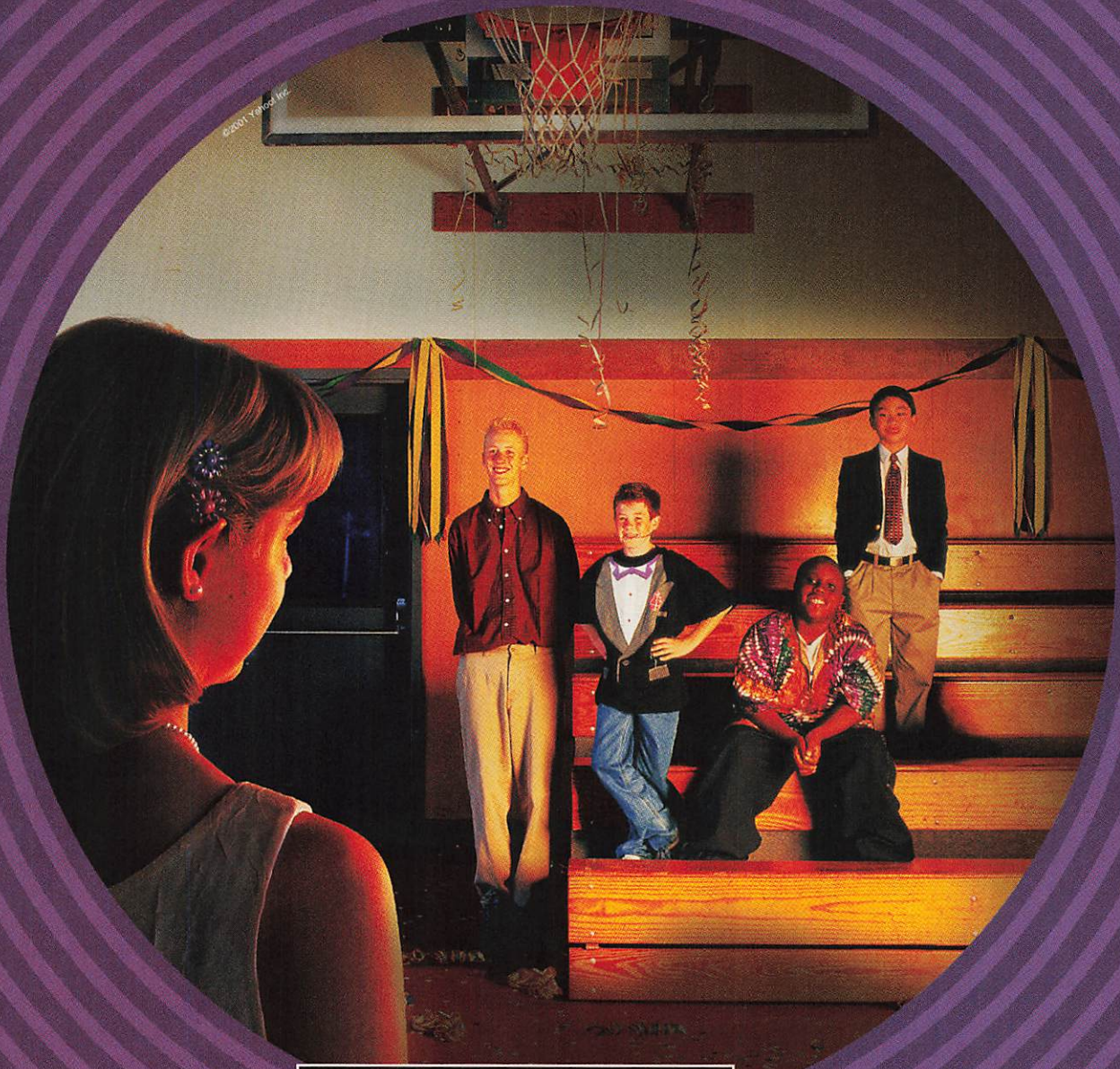
Hunger Free America [hungerfreeamerica.com]

Human Rights Watch [hrw.org]

Make a Wish [wish.org]

Oxfam International [oxfam.org]

United Negro College Fund [uncf.org]



Always comparison shop.

Need to pick up a few things? Hit Yahoo! Shopping. Search Shopping, Auctions, Classifieds and Warehouse all at the same time. It's a regular shopping buffet. shopping.yahoo.com

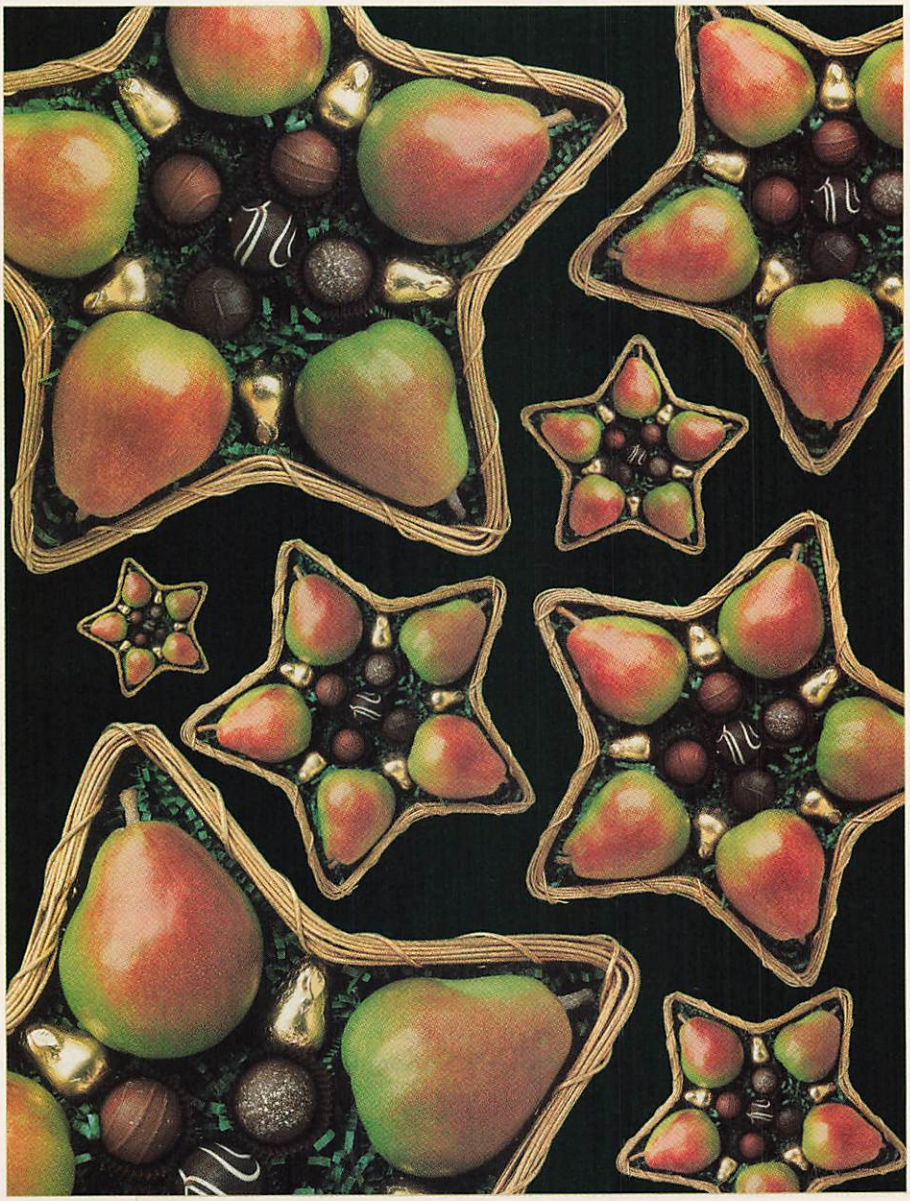
powered by COMPAQ

YAHOO! Shopping

Do You YAHOO!?

web guide

WHERE TO, HOW TO, BEST OF: OUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO LIFE ON THE WEB EDITED BY CREE McCREE



DAVIES+STARR

VISIONS OF SUGARPLUMS

Want your gifts to shine this holiday season? Our all-shopping Web Guide spotlights stellar online stores, from megamalls such as Amazon.com to specialty shops including Harry and David, whose elegant gourmet basket (above) will make its mark at any soiree. From the latest digicams and handheld gadgets to great books and designer chairs, you'll find something sure to please your most discerning recipients—including your finicky cat.

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WHAT'S HOT — AND COOL — ON THE WEB THIS MONTH BY MEAGHAN O'NEILL

STOCKING STUFFERS

Uncommon Goods The stockings may be hung by the chimney with care, but it's up to you to fill 'em up. Try this site for its carefully edited selection of ornaments, jewelry, and accessories. A beaded Palm case ($68) and cuff links made from circuit boards ($60) are baubles sure to delight come Christmas morn. **[uncommongoods.com]**

Archie McPhee Wherever will you find that dashboard Wiggly Hula Girl that Mom covets? Look no further than Archie McPhee, the "outfitters of popular culture." Kitschy finds range from the collectible (Pez dispensers) and the goofy (giant underwear) to the heaven-sent (Angel Snot). **[www.mcphee.com]**

Alltherageonline Perfect for teens and the young at heart, everything at this stylish site is $15 or under. Fill up your checkout basket with rope bracelets, beaded necklaces, and semiprecious rings. **[alltherageonline.com]**

ARTS & CRAFTS

The Origins Anyone with a passion for the past will love a gift from this site. Reproductions of hand-hammered medieval armor, Renaissance tapestries, Greek ceramics, and Italian frescoes are perfect for the

SPOTLIGHT

GIFT BASKET: DAVIES+STARR; MASK: COURTESY OF EZIBA

BUNDLES OF JOY

The gift basket has long been a holiday standby. But unlike the fruitcake, it doesn't have to signify a lack of imagination. For a wide array of options, browse **GiftBaskets.com,** where categories include Relax & Pamper, Romance, and Sports. The NASCAR basket ($89.99) might be just the thing for that hard-to-please teenage nephew. An arrangement of vanilla- or lavender-scented goodies for the tub from **Bath-and-body.com** is sure to please the ladies on your list ($26–$59). Prefer to stick with the traditional? **Harry and David [harryanddavid.com]** offers delightful comestibles that are anything but ordinary. Try a Fancy Tart sampler ($49.95) or (our favorite) a simple box of Royal Riviera Pears (from $25.95).

PORTAL PATROL

Yahoo! Shopping [shopping.yahoo.com] and electronics manufacturer Sony have joined forces to create cross-branded sites. The portal plays host to Sony Style, a section featuring the latest personal electronic gadgets. Also look for Sony Style Connect, a new Internet access service that's perfect for putting those new handheld gizmos to the test.

With thousands of retail stores to choose from, **Lycos Shopping [shop.lycos.com]** is a great launchpad from which to start your holiday buying. Resources include comparison shopping, gift recommendations, a list of safe toys, and tons of catalogs to browse. Customer service reps, available 24/7, can be reached via instant message, chat, or phone.

The holiday season often requires some travel, and at the new co-branded portal between MSN and United Airlines, **MSN: Resource Center [essentials.msn.com/access/united.asp],** you can get the scoop on special fares. While you're there, rack up some extra frequent-flier miles (up to 12,500) when you sign up for MSN Internet access.

discerning history buffs on your list. **[theorigins.com]**

Art & Artifact Whimsy is the overriding sentiment at this old-world shopping spot. Ancient Egypt, Celtic tradition, and art nouveau are among the themes echoed in the site's apparel, decorations, and games. **[artandartifact.com]**

Eziba Search for gifts by price or browse by category (his and hers, art objects, kids) for "handcrafted items globally sourced." Journals from Colombia, pillows from Turkey, and Indonesian masks are just a few of the worldly finds here. **[eziba.com]**

FOOD & WINE

BigEasySeafood.com Send a treat from the culinary mecca of New Orleans. Cajun delicacies such as tasso (smoked pork), crawfish, and crabmeat are available for shipping. Or serve up some authentic andouille (spicy sausage) for your own guests. **[bigeasyseafood.com]**

Wine Searcher.com Not sure what to bring the host? A bottle of wine will always delight. Find out where in your area you can buy his favorite label and vintage. We discovered a hard-to-find Cloudy Bay sauvignon blanc in three shops near us. **[www.wine-searcher.com]**

MISC/NEAT

Gem.net Seems as though most jewelry sites have gone the way of the dodo. But if you don't know the difference between pear-cut and princess-cut stones, there's still hope—and help—here. Originally designed as content-only, the site now offers a selection of unique, modern, and classic pieces. **[gem.net]**

RedEnvelope This is one to bookmark for the holidays and beyond. Search by recipient (mother, kids, couple) or lifestyle (the gourmet, the gardener, the outdoorsman). There's also a section devoted to corporate gifts; it's filled with classic desk accessories and executive toys. **[redenvelope.com]**

THE TRIMMINGS

Bronner's Christmas Wonderland Whether you spend weeks decking the halls with garlands or would simply like a hand-painted nutcracker to display, you'll find a wealth of decorating options at this one-stop megastore. Snag everything from a Christmas tree and some armed-forces ornaments to outdoor lights that will make you the envy of the neighborhood. **[bronners.net]**

Endicott Five Show that you put some effort into your gift-giving (or at least your gift-wrapping) this year with Endicott Five's op-art wrapping paper. This year's holiday collection is called "Peace on Earth" and celebrates "the quieter things in our world." **[endicottfive.com]**

GIFT BOXES: THOM O'CONNOR

THE FAT PIPE

NEWS AND VIEWS FOR HIGH-SPEED SURFERS

HAVE YOURSELF A BROADBAND HOLIDAY

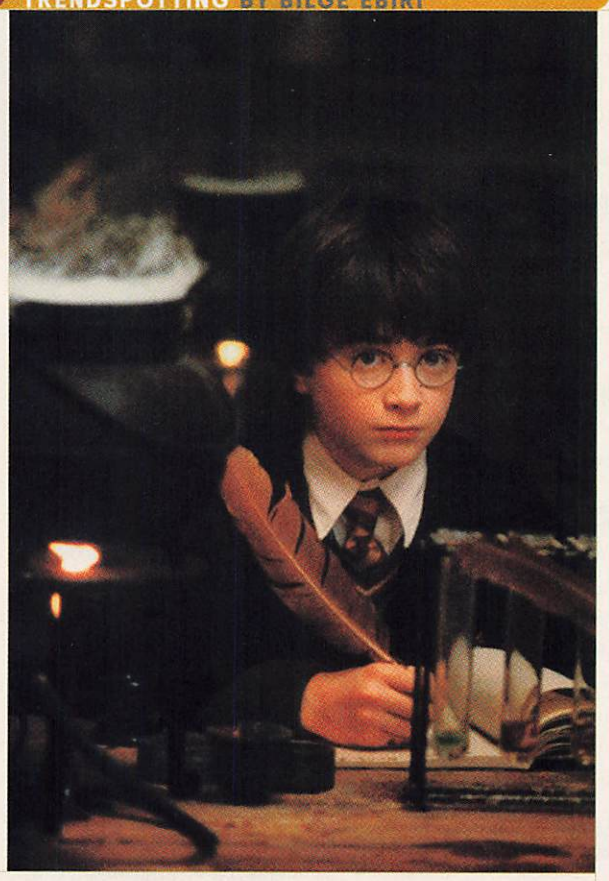
This season, give your family gifts that take advantage of your fast Net connection. A home network would be a good place to start. Among the sleekest solutions is the WB302 11Mbps Wireless Network Starter Kit ($255.99) from **Netgear [netgear.com]**.

Once the network is set up, attach some cool entertainment devices, such as the FWi1000 Internet Radio ($499) from **Philips [philipsusa.com]**. This boom box delivers more than 1,000 international stations and includes dual tape decks, plus a three-CD changer that also plays CD-R and CD-RW disks. Want even more music? The HP Digital Entertainment Center ($999) from **HP [hp.com]** has a 40GB hard drive that holds about 750 CDs' worth of music. Hook it up to your stereo, your TV, and the Net. Then sit back and control your collection on the TV screen, making mixes you can burn onto disk using the included CD-RW drive.

Looking to stay superconnected? Try the Internet Home Management System ($149.95 and up) from **Xanboo [xanboo.com]**. Deploy inexpensive cameras and sensors around the house, then communicate wirelessly to the base station at your Net-connected PC. Everything is monitored at Xanboo's site, so wherever you travel, you can check in on your home. **DON WILLMOTT**

web guide
entertainment & sports

TRENDSPOTTING BY BILGE EBIRI



A VERY HARRY CHRISTMAS

Make way for the season's movie merchandise

Products tied to new releases are big during any holiday season. But this year promises to be a doozy, thanks to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and *The Fellowship of the Ring*, which is set to hit theaters in December (for more on this, see page 104).

With such kid-friendly films, expect a lot of toys. Warner Bros. is unleashing a host of Harry Potter figures and board games destined to appeal to young ones. Check up on the latest products at the movie's official site, **Harry Potter [harrypotter.com]**. You'll get the scoop on what your brood is likely to be demanding this year, as well as on memorabilia aimed at serious buyers.

The adult demand for collectibles is something the *Lord of the Rings* epic hopes to cash in on. J.R.R. Tolkien–related items predate the films, as a quick search on eBay reveals (a Gandalf knife from the Franklin Mint!?). For merchandise from the movies, visit **Mystic Steel [mysticsteel.com]**, which specializes in fantasy-genre must-haves. There you can find remarkably detailed figurines—meant not to be played with but to be kept under lock and key until sold many years later for what you'd hope would be astronomical prices. The hubs **TheOneRing.net** and **The Lord of the Rings [lordoftherings.net]** serve as ideal jumping-off points for locating a spectrum of products associated with the fantasy epic.

Although merchandising is sometimes a bigger deal than the actual movie, it's not always a guaranteed success. Note the *Final Fantasy* figures in the dollar bins at Kmart. Will the latest batch of toys be a hit? Wizards like Harry and Gandalf can just consult their crystal balls. But mere mortals will have to wait and see how good the movies are.

GREAT BOOKS

GET LIT

Powells.com The warehouse of this friendly giant takes up an entire city block in Portland, Oregon. Every title is online, with new books listed alongside used copies that are available for a fraction of the price. Literate commentary, imaginative subject categories, and a fast search engine make Powell's a bibliophile's dream. **[powells.com]**

MEDIUM RARE

Abebooks.com Looking for a first edition, out-of-print book, or other hard-to-find title? This site combines the inventories of more than 8,000 sellers of used and rare books into a single database, making comparison shopping easy. It doesn't provide the editorial explication that's available at Powell's, but it could increase your chances of locating an elusive tome. **[abebooks.com]**

PICTURE PERFECT

Photo-Eye A picture is worth a thousand words. In addition to its online galleries, the site stocks exhibition catalogs, artist monographs, historical treatises, critical studies, technical manuals, and coffee-table books. **[photo-eye.com]**

HARRY POTTER: PETER MOUNTAIN; BOOK: THOM O'CONNOR

MUSIC OF THE SPHERES Photographer Roy DeCarava captures the artist's soul in his book *The Sound I Saw*, available at Photo-Eye Books & Prints.

MOVIE MEMORABILIA

COMIC RELIEF

NextPlanetOver This entertaining site is the place to go for the latest superhero caper and the strangest underground rants. **[npo.com]**

GO LOCAL

BookSense.com Prefer the personalized service of smaller bookstores? Type in your ZIP code and a title, author, or keyword, and BookSense generates a list of copies in stock at independent shops close to home. **[www.booksense.com]** FRANK GREEN

ONE-STOP SHOP

The Hollywood Shopping Network From *Psycho* posters to James Dean refrigerator magnets, this site has it all. Head to the Prop Shop for clapboards and director's chairs, or click on Golden Hollywood for retro doodads. Tuck an *I Love Lucy* Happiness Pillow ($20) under your honey's head, and you won't have any 'splainin' to do this season. **[hollywoodnet.com/shop]**

MOUSE HOUSE

Disney Store Walt Disney would have turned 100 this year, and his namesake store is making the most of it, with all manner of items emblazoned with the 100 Years of Magic logo. Our favorite: an adorable Mickey Mouse snow globe ($80). Looking to trim your tree? The Snow White Boutique offers a limited-edition ornament set for a piddling $395. **[disneystore.com]**

GOING, GOING, GONE

eBay: Movies For the most extensive array of Hollywood memorabilia, click over to eBay, where thousands of amazing items are on the block. When we last checked: Charlie Chaplin's contract from *The Pilgrim,* the black robe worn by the killer in *Scream 2,* and a signed photo of Natalie Wood as a child. **[pages.ebay.com/catindex/movies.html]** PAMELA DES BARRES

SPORTS TEAM GEAR

ALL-STAR STORE

OnlineSports.com There are lots of places online to buy jerseys, hats, helmets, and balls that celebrate your home team, but this site outscores the competition with its vast selection. Snow globes filled with confetti in team colors, stadium replicas handcrafted in natural stone, lamps, blankets, mailboxes, birdhouses, doormats, mouse pads...you name it. If a product commemorates a pro or college team, you probably can find it here. **[onlinesports.com]**

CHAMPION SHOTS

The Sports Poster Warehouse Whether the sports fan on your list thinks of your gift as a home run, a touchdown, or a slam dunk, you can score with a poster of his favorite superjock. Beyond baseball, football, and basketball stars, this Canadian warehouse features hockey, soccer, boxing, golf, extreme sports, and even lacrosse celebrities. Prices range from $8.95 for a newly minted poster to a couple of hundred bucks for rare vintage wall art. **[puresportsart.com]**

GOLD MEDAL

Sports Jewelry Super Store It's hard to beat jewelry as a gift that will be treasured for a lifetime. Fans can attend the next home game in style, sporting the team-licensed rings, watches, and charms available here. For U.S. team spirit, check the Proud to be American collection. **[sportsjewelrystore.com]**

HOME TEAM HEAT

Hot Sauce Harry's To warm up a chilly Christmas morning, stuff a sports fanatic's stocking with hot sauce sanctioned by her favorite NFL, MLB, or collegiate team. Tailgate-party kits package cayenne pepper sauce, *picante* salsa, and barbecue sauce in collectible gift boxes decorated with official team colors and logos. **[hotsauceharrys.com]** FRANK GREEN

ESSENTIALS

BEST-SELLERS

AMAZON.COM [amazon.com]
Need we even mention it? This *über* destination still has one of the widest selections around for your reading, listening, and viewing pleasure—as well as the electronics you might need to play them.

BARNES&NOBLE.COM [bn.com]
The online arm of the chain has the best-sellers you'd expect, in addition to used and rare books, e-books, DVDs, and video games.

CDNOW [cdnow.com]
Browse by musical genre or search for movies and albums by artist or title. Can't decide what to give? Purchase a gift certificate.

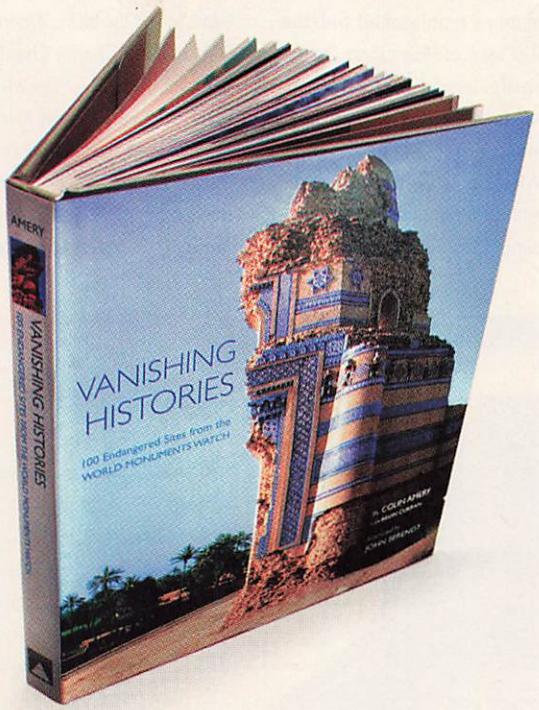
BUY.COM [buy.com]
Search for music and books by category or delve into films, divided into DVD and VHS stores. Round-the-clock customer service is available.

WALMART.COM [walmart.com]
Not as deep a selection of entertainment products, but prices are often cheaper.

DAVIES+STARR

web guide
travel & recreation

GETAWAY GURU BY GAIL HENRY



BOOKING PASSAGE

Gifts that inspire fabulous trips

Like a smart personal librarian, online bookstores can suggest titles for every nomad on your list. Smaller sites tend to have more personality—and sometimes a greater selection of travel books—than the megastores. **Book Passage [bookpassage.com]** stocks an impressive array of destination guides. **Longitude [longitudebooks.com]** caters to travelers interested in art and the environment; the outstanding new title *Vanishing Histories: 100 Sites from the World Monuments Watch*, available there or at the **World Monuments Fund [worldmonuments.org]**, takes you on a politically conscious version of the "grand tour." Is the Land of the Rising Sun on your horizon? **O-Hayo Sensei's Online Japan Bookstore [ohayosensei.com/books/Welcome.html]** is packed with fascinating volumes on topics ranging from history to pop culture.

What's hot off the press? Check New and Future Releases at **Amazon.com**. That's where I dug up *American Roots Music*, whose author traveled cross-country exploring the origins of zydeco, blues, Tejano, and other indigenous music. Use the book as a road map for your own musical journey—a shortcut through the 2,194 titles that Amazon retrieved on New Orleans, Nashville, and Memphis.

CAMERA SHOP

PICTURE POSTCARDS

Photoalley.com What better gift for an inveterate tourist than a new camera with which to capture the next trip? This store carries a broad selection of major brands at discount prices. Detailed product specifications, best-seller lists, and published reviews make smart shopping a breeze. **[photoalley.com]**

COMPUTER AGE

Digital Photography Review; CameraClub.com Digital cameras are high on this year's wish list, but which one is right for you? DPR's buying guides let you zoom in feature by feature, and they position products side by side so you can compare specs. Ready to shop? Hit CameraClub for a large selection of digicams, film scanners, editing cards, and other accessories for computer imaging. **[dpreview.com]; [thecameraclub.com]**

CHEAP SHOTS

www.Netphotostore.com You don't have to spend a fortune to outfit your favorite shutterbug. For less than $100, you can whet the appetite of a beach-bound lensman with a waterproof camera, for instance. The kids are bound to love the candy-colored Polaroids and packs of sticky film, and you can save money using the site's Pick the Price You Want to Pay feature. **[www.netphotostore.com]** FRANK GREEN

TRAVEL GEAR

EASY GOING

Magellan's Got global gadflies in your family? Ease their passage with quick-drying underwear, digital phone adapters, neck pillows, walking sticks, first-aid kits, translators, and lots more. Your favorite tourist need never feel achy, disheveled, or unplugged again. **[magellans.com]**

GIZMOS AND GADGETS

Walkabout Travel Gear Based in Moab, Utah, this cleverly organized site specializes in gear for the road less traveled. Intrepid wanderers on the move can stay wired using the section called Solving the Riddle of Global Computer and Modem Use. And check Tools for Mobile Apes to find super stocking stuffers, including a flat flashlight the size of a credit card. **[walkabouttravelgear.com]**

IN THE BAG

Eagle Creek A sturdy carryall makes a great gift, whether the recipient travels on business, hikes the planet, or just walks the dog. Eagle Creek offers luggage, duffels, backpacks, day travelers, and other totables in many shapes, sizes, and colors. **[eaglecreek.com]** HEIDI LAFLECHE

BOOK: THOM O'CONNOR

web guide
health & beauty

VITAL SIGNS BY MEAGHAN O'NEILL

FACE: PATRICK MOLNAR/STONE; PERFUME: THOM O'CONNOR

SPA CHECK

Give the gift of a pause that refreshes

If someone on your list needs a holiday from her holiday after the eggnog runs dry and the relatives are gone, a trip to a spa could be the perfect gift. Whether she would prefer a deluxe day of relaxation or a simple seaweed wrap, **About: Spas [spas.about.com]** can help you locate a nearby spot or a niche service, such as an aromatherapist. At **Spa Finder [spafinder.com]**, select a state or specific resort for information on day spas and "stay" spas. Once you've found just the place for that rejuvenating hot-rock massage, you can purchase a gift certificate online. **BlissWorld [blissworld.com]** helps you bring the spa to her, with products that promise a delicious afternoon in the tub.

And who says men don't love to be pampered? Put your guy in the practiced hands of a licensed massage therapist using the worldwide locator at **Massage Network [massagenetwork.com]**. Or help him take the edge off a hard day's shopping with lavish lotions and brushes from **The Art of Shaving [theartofshaving.com]**.

WORKOUT GEAR

HOME GYM

The Fitness Jumpsite! New Year's resolutions to trim that bulging waistline almost always follow holiday overindulgence. Why not give that special friend the tools to actually get back in shape? Learn how to outfit a home gym that matches fitness goals with your budget and floor space, then follow links to gear manufacturers and dealers. **[primusweb.com/fitnesspartner]**

EXERCISE CLOTHES

Hummingbird Activewear; House of Pain Forget saggy sweats. Women of all ages feel more chic working out in Hummingbird's capri pants and lingerie-strapped camis. Looking for something more macho? Try House of Pain for unisex workout wear with attitude: hooded vests, Lycra shorts, and gym-rat muscle jackets. **[hummingbirdwear.com]; [houseofpainironwear.com]**

LIMBER UP

Hugger Mugger As you build strength and mass, yoga is a great way to keep those growing muscles flexible. Hugger Mugger has a full line of yoga products, from the essential sticky mat to blocks, bolsters, eye bags, and videos. Gift ideas for your favorite yogi include sterling silver Sanskrit "om" pendants. **[huggermugger.com]** LORENA HAVENS, CARL FRANZ

FRAGRANCES

THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC

Bourbon French Parfums Located in New Orleans's historic French Quarter, this 150-year-old perfumery still mixes fragrances by hand. Capture the "original scent" of the sensual city with a collection ($30) of six Kus Kus perfumes—each is one-eighth of an ounce. Or cast a spell on your sweetie with a re-creation of Marie Laveau's fabulous love potion. **[neworleansperfume.com]**

DESIGNER DEALS

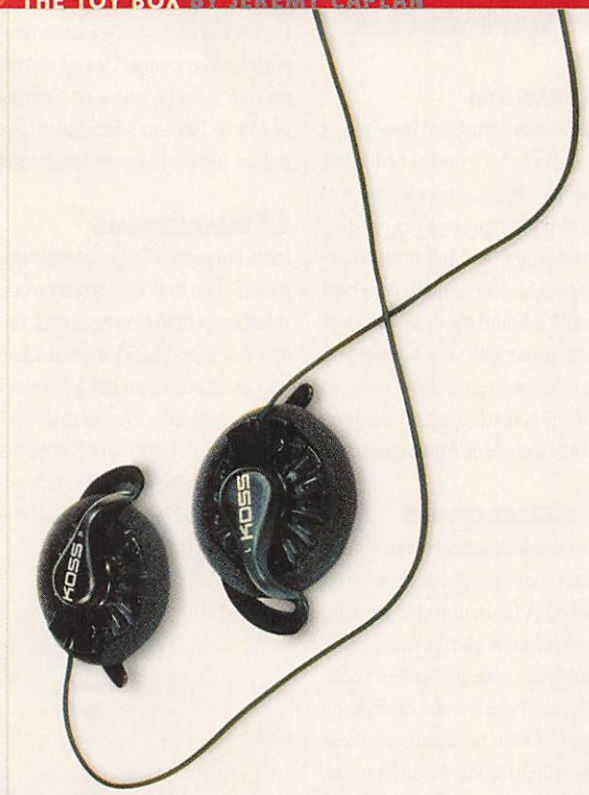
Paris Fragrance Get wholesale discounts of up to 80 percent on a vast selection of brand-name scents. Unless you spend $250, the reduction isn't as spectacular, but 1.7 ounces of Thierry Mugler's Angel costs $65, saving you about $20. Spritz the man in your life with 3.4 ounces of Calvin for $27—roughly half the retail price. **[pfragrance.com]**

CLASSIC SCENTS

LongLostPerfume.com This delightful site offers timeless classics such as My Sin, along with copycat versions of such originals as Ambush and Tweed. Substitute Twilight for Evening in Paris, for instance, and summon the scent of a summer night circa 1950. Site testimonials claim the effects are positively Proustian. **[longlostperfume.com]** PAMELA DES BARRES

web guide
gadgets & gaming

THE TOY BOX BY JEREMY CAPLAN



THE PLAYER'S THE THING
Choosing the right MP3 model

MP3 players are sure to be hot gifts this year, but with more than 70 models on the market, choosing the right one can be tricky. Start with **What's The Best: MP3 Player [whatsthebest.net/NS/mp3players]**, which explains differences between products. Some units store a maximum of 10 songs, for example, while others can hold a thousand. Some fit in your pocket, but others are better suited to your car. Another valuable resource is **eCoustics.com**, an audio hub with comparison-shopping tools and links to hundreds of published reviews and articles.

Once you know which specifications are important to you, head to the **Active Buyer's Guide [activebuyersguide.com]**. You check off the features you desire; the site presents a list of recommended players that match your budget and preferences, and it provides links to online retailers. Still unsure? Read consumer reviews of your favorite models at **Epinions.com** to get additional feedback. One tip: You'll probably want some comfy headphones to replace the cheap ones usually included with MP3 players, so visit **HeadRoom [headphone.com]** to snag some state-of-the-art ears. The last stop? Stock up at **Batteries.com**.

PERSONAL ELECTRONICS

START HERE
CNET No matter what kind of gadget or PC peripheral you're looking for, CNET offers a buying guide to take you by the hand. Or cut to the chase by heading for the Top 5 list in each category. In many cases, the products are accompanied by a video review, and in all cases you're one click away from a survey of the latest prices at several stores. **[cnet.com]**

WELL IN HAND
PalmGear.com Is someone on your shopping list an obsessive Palm user? Faceplates, carrying cases, and add-on modules are all available here, alongside a huge library of software. You can even select a Palm device and have it configured with a customized bundle of software. **[palmgear.com]**

WHERE TO BUY
800.com Here's an electronics store that goes the extra mile. It matches prices at other e-tailers, offers free shipping on selected items, and has live online help. Keep a lookout for deals; there's almost always something. **[800.com]** DON WILLMOTT

PC AND VIDEO GAMES

START HERE
GameSpot; GetIntoTheGame.com The encyclopedic GameSpot reviews PC and video games, compares platforms, and previews upcoming titles—all of which makes shopping decisions easier. Although Get Into the Game comes from retail giant Target, you can't actually shop on the site. But it's worth a browse for its extensive collection of screen shots and video clips—a good way to judge how much fun a game will be. **[gamespot.com]; [getintothegame.com]**

WHERE TO BUY
EBgames.com The online version of Electronics Boutique organizes itself by platform, so if you're a Nintendo household, you'll be able to go right to that page and start shopping. The store also offers a large selection of used games, a convenience if you'd like to try Madden NFL 2000 for $10 before deciding whether to shell out $50 for Madden NFL 2002. Parents should check the PC Education section, which presents learning games according to grade level. **[ebgames.com]** D.W.

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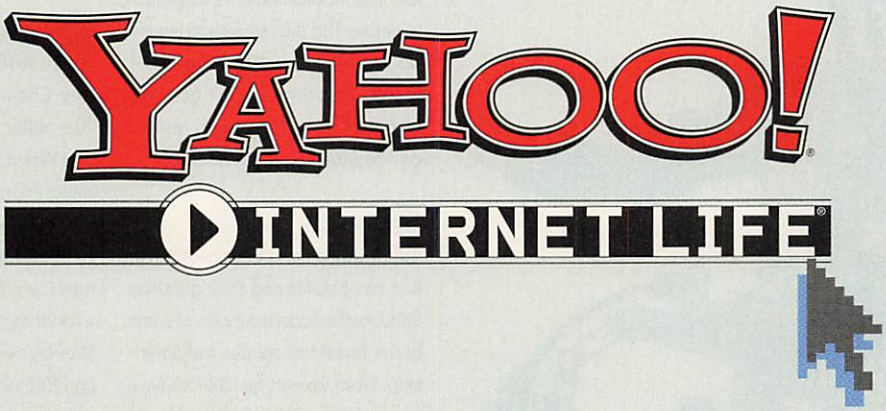

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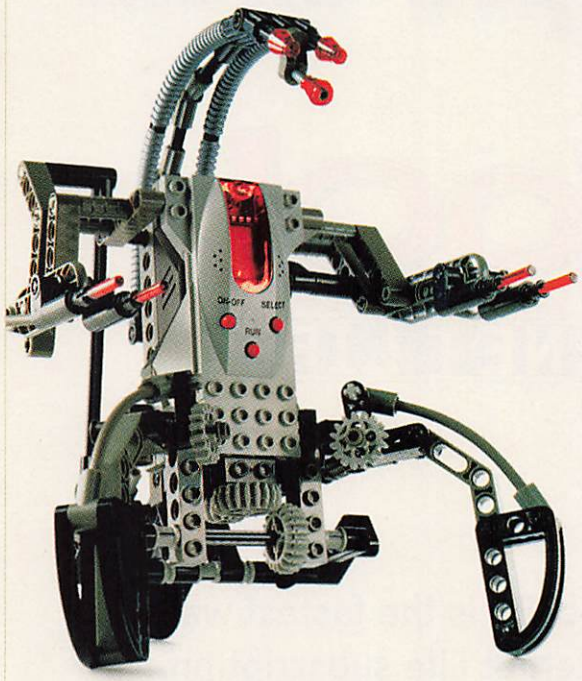

MIND BENDERS
Get inventive and build a bot

Want a supercool gift for your tech-savvy kids—or yourself? **LEGO MindStorms [mindstorms.lego.com]** is the only "toy" we know that has inspired a *...for Dummies* book. An updated version of the wildly popular robot-building set debuted just in time for holiday shopping. Once you've mastered the basics, you might be ready for add-ons such as Exploration Mars, which lets you re-create the famous bots from the Pathfinder mission. The MindStorms franchise has even teamed with George Lucas's *Star Wars* universe, putting kits for R2-D2 and other superstar robots on the market. Keep a lookout for more such bots to be launched.

Looking for more-traditional mind-benders? The jigsaw kits at **American Puzzles [americanpuzzles.com]** feature complex images such as Escher drawings and fractal explosions. For three-dimensional challenges, try **The Puzzle & Craft Factory [www.ultranet.com/~puzzles]**, which presents a big selection of medieval-looking metal puzzles that you slide and squeeze to solve. Also available are loads of handcrafted wooden puzzles, including some inspired by the infamous Tower of Hanoi, a classic brainteaser that's now used to teach computer programming.

MILITARY BUFFS

BOARD STIFFS
WarWeb.com Games of military strategy look back to a time when warfare was simpler and enemies, easier to define. This one-stop shop is well-stocked with historical board games—perfect gifts for armchair generals who feel no battle should remain decided forever. **[warweb.com]**

TIN MEN
4milmodels For collectors of miniature combatants and their gear, this British outfit stocks examples of some of the finest toy-soldier craftsmanship. From Roman gladiatrices (yes, women) through the Crimean War to Vietnam, the history of combat is offered in obsessive, hand-painted detail. **[www.4milmodels.com]**

AS SEEN ON TV
Shop: A&E, Biography, The History Channel Often referred to as "the Hitler Channel" for its extensive World War II programming, the History Channel also gives generous airtime to other conflicts, ancient and modern. Its online store now features a Civil War shop, with everything from original *Harper's Weekly* newspapers ($150) to Yank and Reb playing cards ($15). **[store.aetv.com]** DONALD MILLER

MUSEUM STORES

MOTHER LODE
SmithsonianStore.com Like the Smithsonian itself, the institution's store is vast, housing reproductions and adaptations of objects from museums and galleries. From African tin sculpture to psychedelic kaleidoscopes, the selection is colorful, diverse, and largely affordable. **[smithsonianstore.com]**

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
Exploratorium Store; American Museum of Natural History: Museum Store San Francisco's interactive Exploratorium offers puzzles, games, toys, books, and kits for aspiring scientists of all ages. Check the American Museum of Natural History for gifts that celebrate the wonders of the earth, including a choice selection of gemstones. **[exploratoriumstore.com]; [amnhstore.org]**

HIGH CULTURE
MoMA Online Store New York City's Museum of Modern Art stocks a stunning array of products spanning a century of design. From the Frank Lloyd Wright–inspired mug set to the footless and futuristic red Swing armchair by designer Denis Santachiara (below), there's something to please every modernist and postmodernist on your list this year. **[momastore.org]** ALEXIS ADAMS

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THE HOME FRONT BY CHRISTY EPSTEIN

GLAD TIDINGS, GOOD CHEER

Raise a cup to festive times

'Tis the season to burst into song—and to break out the holiday spirits. Laws regulating the online sale of alcohol vary from state to state, but **Wine.com** (now owned by eVineyard) has forged a series of distribution deals that cover most U.S. locales, and the site boasts the best-stocked virtual shelves. Red wine just seems to taste better in the cold winter months, so why not buy a case of your favorite varietal—and bring a bottle to the hosts of all the fabulous parties you'll be attending. For that romantic dinner at home, you might want something with more of a pedigree. At **AuctionWineOnline.com**, you can bid against the experts for bottles of rare vintages. Feeling creative? Head to **Wine-Art [wineart.com]**, purchase a kit to ferment your own grapes, and let the bacchanal begin.

If you think cabernet sauvignon is for wusses, snag a flask and some tumblers from Old No. 7 at **Jack Daniel's [www.jackdaniels.com]**. Just remember: It's still illegal to sell Tennessee sour mash online, so filling 'em is up to you.

Feeling especially festive? Turn your living room into a tavern with a dartboard and pint glasses from **PubGear [pubgear.com]**, or set your cocktails aglow with Litecubes. For more deluxe accoutrements, try **WineBasics [winebasics.com]**, where you can dazzle gift recipients with designer wine stoppers, Venetian glass decanters, and, of course, corkscrews.

If you're older than 25, then imbibing heartily will probably take its toll somewhere around mid-December. **Hungover.net** has remedies that can keep your head off the desk and ensure you're perky by your five o'clock eggnog. Bottoms up!

GIFTS WITH HEART

GIVE HOPE

Gifts with Heart and Hope Does your favorite uncle really need another pricey electronic gizmo? The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization, offers some thoughtful alternatives. Gifts you can buy in someone's name include school supplies for Iraqi children and kitchen gear for needy U.S. families. The site is also accepting donations to the No More Victims fund for peaceful solutions to the war on terrorism. **[www.afsc.org/gifts/gifts.htm]**

SERVE SOMEBODY

Seva Foundation *Seva* means "compassionate action" in Sanskrit. When you give a Gift of Service, the foundation sends a handsome card to the recipient that describes the work you've chosen to support. Programs include training midwives in Guatemala and teaching doctors in Tibet to perform cataract surgery. **[seva.org]**

OFFER SHELTER

Habitat for Humanity International: Gifts From the Heart Jimmy Carter's pet project offers new beginnings to families who might otherwise never achieve the American dream of home ownership. Your gift can help build a real house: Give a floor joist ($10) or 50 pounds of nails ($20), or spring big for 50 bundles of roof shingles ($250). **[habitat.org/giving/gfth.html]**

FIND A CAUSE

Independent Charities of America This site screens reputable nonprofits to help you direct a gift to someone's favorite cause. Search hundreds of organizations by topic, including the environment, human rights, medical research, and military and patriotic charities. To make a gift donation, simply click on Give Online and indicate that you'd like your contribution to be a tribute to someone special. Inspired to keep giving? Follow the link to volunteer opportunities near you. **[independentcharities.org]** LORENA HAVENS, CARL FRANZ

For more ways to give with heart, turn to "Helping Hands," page 116.

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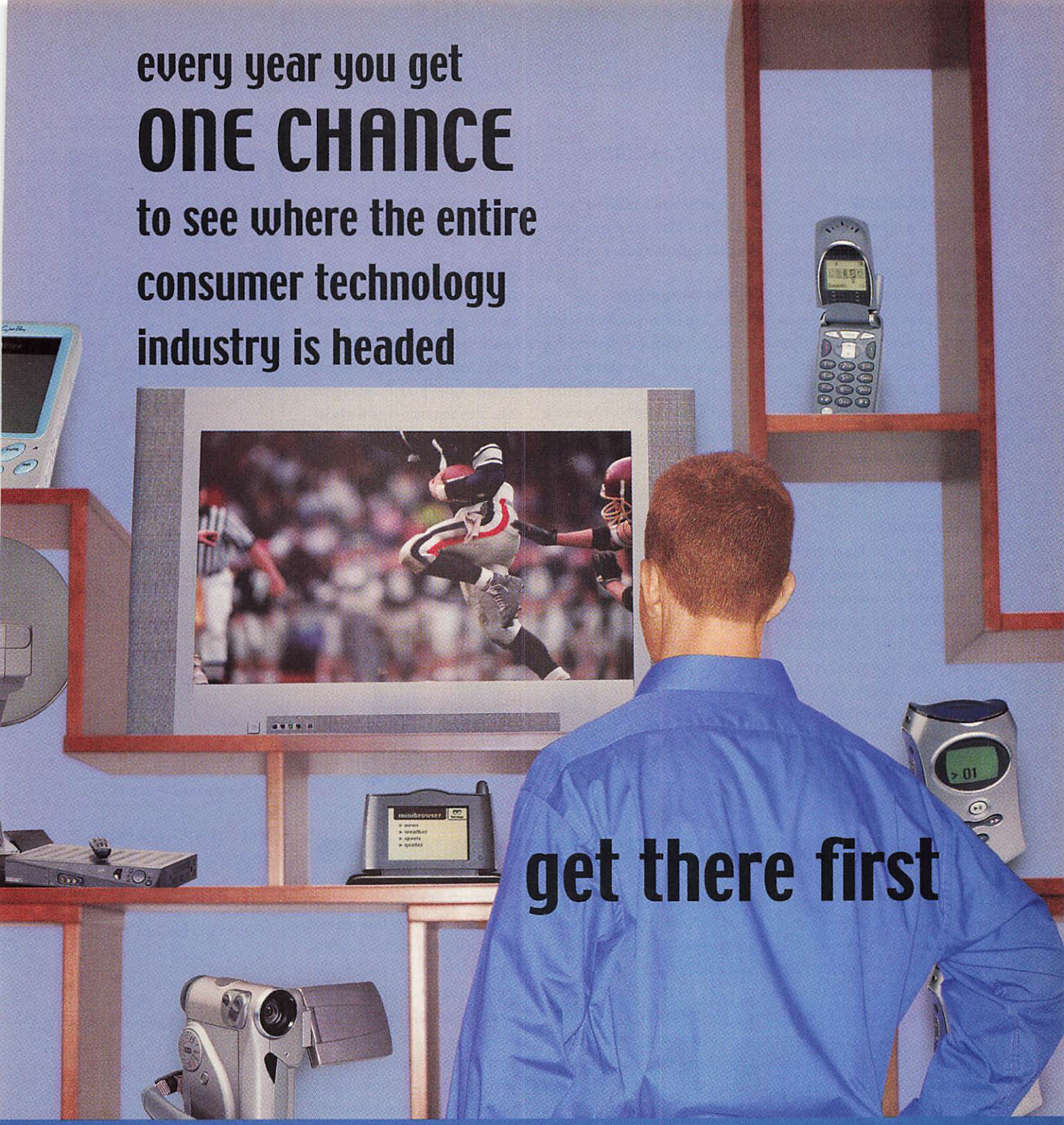

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PetsMart.com Don't forget your furry, finned, and feathered friends this holiday season. PetsMart, which snapped up rival Pets.com, offers discount-price gifts for all types of critters. If you've let Fido, Fifi, or Fang's stocking stuffers go till the last minute, stock up fast here. Visit the Adoption Center in the Charities section and consider what might be the best gift of all: a home for a needy animal. **[petsmart.com]**

BUY BY BREED

DogToys.com; CatToys.com Pet toys are too pricey to have a new ball destroyed—or worse, ignored—in the first five minutes. Here, you can search by breed, size, personality, and play style to help ensure that rough-and-tumble pets get indestructible toys, while little mouths and paws get soft and squeaky playthings. Hop over to Donate and Save to give a gift to a needy dog or cat awaiting adoption and you'll save a few kibbles off your order. **[dogtoys.com]; [cattoys.com]**

SIT UP AND BEG!

Three Dog Bakery Rover is bound to turn up his nose at plain old dog biscuits once he's sampled gourmet cookies baked with carob, peanut butter, honey, oats, and other wholesome ingredients. They look so good, you might be tempted to try 'em yourself! Treats for kitties, too. **[threedog.com]**

FUZZY WUZZY

TheFerretStore.com Find hammocks, toys, and—yes—fashions for ferrets. Does your pal smell a little funky? Spiff up the fuzzy fellow for the holidays with odor-control products. Then dress him in his Santa suit. **[theferretstore.com]** HEIDI LAFLECHE

KID STUFF

TOY STORY

FAO Schwarz Not sure what to get your favorite tot? FAO Schwarz makes holiday shopping easy by letting you browse by age; by toy category, such as action figures or dolls; by brand name; and by character, such as Harry Potter. Still stumped? Telephone and e-mail assistance are available seven days a week. **[fao.com]**

COMFORT CLOTHES

Hanna Andersson Often referred to as "Hannas" by parents in the know, Andersson clothes come in soft, blended fabrics that are built to handle wear and tear. Warm tights, clogs for wee feet, classic yellow slickers, and thick, cozy corduroys are just some of the goodies you can find for children of all ages. Prices tend to be high, but the sale section offers generous discounts on overstocked items. **[hannaandersson.com]**

GOOD READS

Chinaberry With her two-year-old daughter by her side, Ann Ruethling began the Chinaberry catalog 19 years ago to provide children's books that would inspire and amuse—and cultivate compassion. The online version offers hundreds of classic and contemporary titles, with recommendations by age level. **[chinaberry.com]**

SPORTS STOP

Outdoor Kids' Source Outfit your favorite young adventurer with high-performance gear, including backpacks and sleeping bags and snowshoes designed to fit the tiniest of feet. For parents, the site offers child carriers built to withstand the rigors of the trail. **[kidssource.com]** ALEXIS ADAMS

SPOTLIGHT

LABORS OF LOVE

MAKE-STUFF.COM If you look at the world around you and think, "Hey, I could make that," this site can help you fabricate everything from car wax to glue. For more-romantic unguents, hit Formulas, Remedies & Concoctions and learn to brew bath oils, herbal shampoo, and aftershave. **[make-stuff.com]**

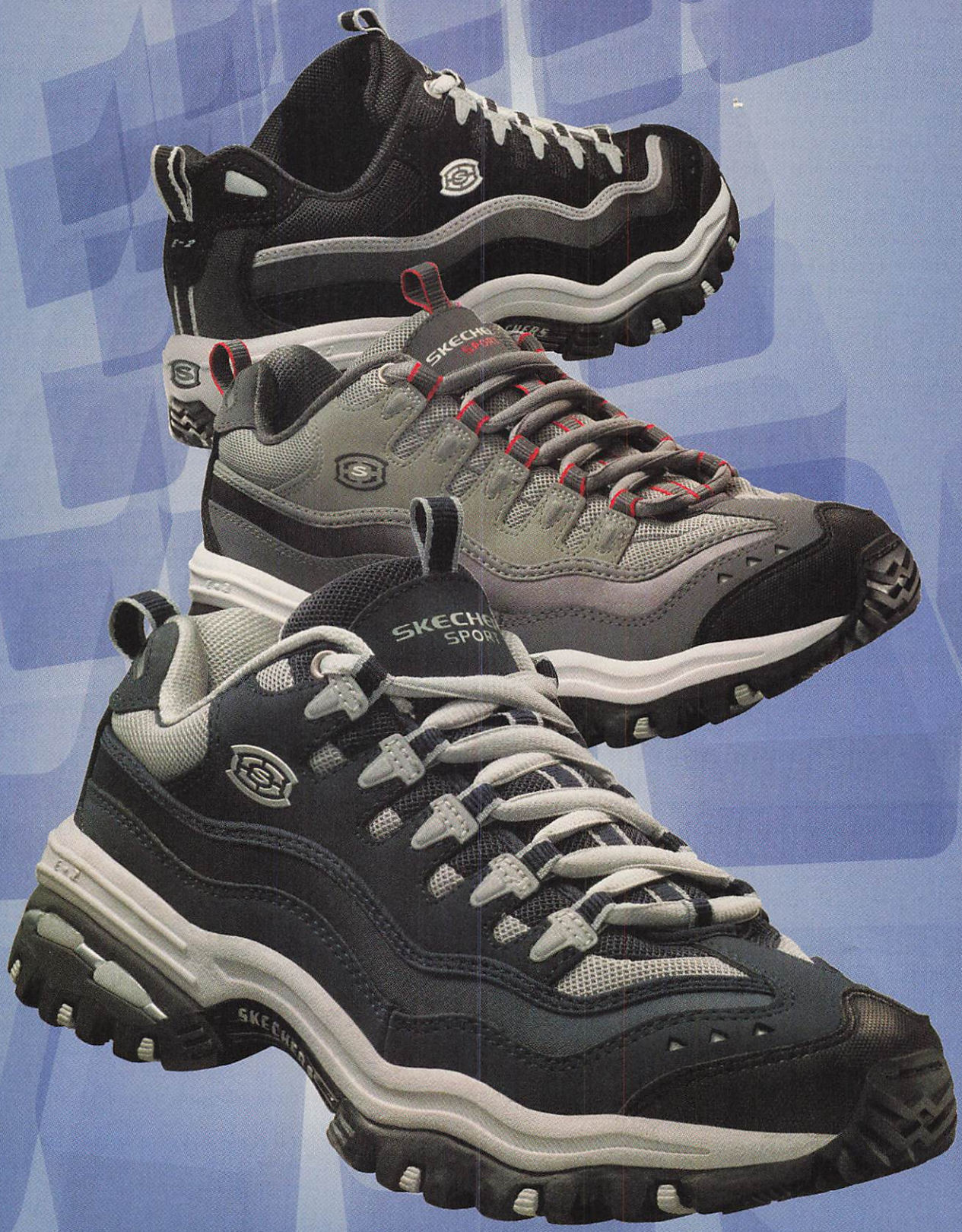
MAKE YOUR OWN SNOWDOMES Personalize the classic kitschy souvenir with family photos. Immerse a portrait of your pet in a blizzard. Make a silly surfer hang 10 in front of your favorite beach shot. Put your sweetie on a tiny TV, or order the Eight Dome Kit and fill the globes with figments of your imagination. **[snowdomes.com/makeyerown.html]**

MESA VISTA PRESS Want to express yourself as you cruise down life's highways? Order custom bumper stickers with magnetic or adhesive backing. Mesa Vista can even print a single sticker for that special someone when Honk If You're Horny just won't do. **[published.com/mvp]** KALISTA SALE

DOG TREATS: THOM O'CONNOR; SHAMPOO: JOHNNY HERNANDEZ/GETTYONE

SKECHERS SPORT

01



Scheer CONTINUED FROM PAGE 71

a university functionary who deals with international student travel, the use of the phrase "the Russians are coming" in an e-mailed reference to a pending visit of students was sufficient to prompt an FBI inquiry.

Only uneducated fools—and unfortunately the hijackers were anything but uneducated fools—would fail to conceal their electronic communications more adroitly. No one planning a hijacking, bombing, or assassination is likely to use those words in e-mail communications, and yet, because electronic traffic is so vast, its monitoring is usually reduced to the laughably simplistic.

It is clear that the intelligence breakdown occurred not on the electronic snooping side, but rather in the old-fashioned spying on, and infiltration of, potential terrorist organizations.

James Bond's superiors provided him with all kinds of high-tech gadgets, but what he learned about the enemy was usually from sleeping with the right sources and other on-the-ground tricks of conventional spies. Hunting for information in the tents and caves of rural Afghanistan may not be glamorous, but that is where the information is—spoken in moments of indiscretion by real people. You're simply not going to find it in virtual dialogue online, for a variety of reasons, both technically arcane and blindingly obvious.

The fact is, ordinary citizens will be affected far more by the Internet-oriented parts of this legislation than will terrorists. Not to mention the irony that this shameless attempt to curtail the liberty of the American public is being done in the name of patriotism. Congratulations, senators and congressmen, you just did bin Laden's job for him. ■

Playing God CONTINUED FROM PAGE 102

in an interactive conversation is not his or her ability to listen and obey, but the capacity to hear, process, and then express. The interactive universe does not exist without the active participation of its people—and this participation is the ongoing act of creation itself. Talk about playing God.

FROM EVOLUTION TO EMERGENCE

There are a few faiths in which congregants are invited to participate in the creation and interpretation of the underlying narrative. Certain Jewish sects spurn answers in favor of more questions and interpretation; Quakers enjoy a dogma-free, town-meeting-style Sabbath. Most religious traditions, though, simply treat their believers as a "mass" who must depend on priests or ministers for access to the "story." But just as the Internet has led patients to information about alternative medical treatments (often against doctor's orders), it has given congregants something in the spiritual realm that is very rare—the ability to find alternative stories about who we are, who made us, and why.

More important than any one story we may have discovered or written, the experience of sifting through them all and writing our own has changed our relationship to religion, perhaps forever. The Internet is anathema to unitary narrative. If you want to understand life only as a story etched in stone, you had better stay away.

Every early culture composed stories—myths—to explain the basic facts of existence. For centuries, we have understood our world—even our sciences—as being somehow authored: that things were set in motion by someone or something. We cling to the belief that our existence proceeds by design. That's why Darwin's theory of evolution was such a threat to our narrative understanding of the world, and why creationists resist its implications to this day. But even those of us who believe in evolution have been able to impose a kind of narrative on top of it in which we imagine matter and life to be groping steadily and consciously toward complexity, with evolution itself as the agent of that grand authorial entity we dearly hope exists.

Now our computers are forcing us to entertain new, even less linear models for why things happen. One of these models, described in Steven Johnson's new book, *Emergence,* explores the way everything from ant colonies to ancient cities finds its order. It turns out that queen ants issue no decrees, and ancient cities still in existence today had no official planners. The necessary preconditions must exist, but it now appears that life, organisms, communities, and order arise—emerge, in other words—from the bottom up. There is no central story, yet there is radical change and something that, if it isn't intelligence, has often been mistaken for it.

And what is the chief prerequisite for emergence to occur? You guessed it: networking. Interconnectivity is what allows an "it" to become a "they." Instead of acting on its own, each atom, molecule, cell, organism, or community can act as part of a larger complex—a networked being.

FROM SHEEP TO SHEPHERDS

Almost anyone who has been online has seen evidence of emergent behavior. Just watch the way communities form around reviewers on **Amazon.com**, or the way opinions pile on to discussions at **Slashdot [slashdot.org]**, or the way fan Web sites spring up about the latest sci-fi movie.

Consider what the Net has done to television. The current TV season is littered with so-called reality shows. We're fed up with authored stories; we'd rather see programs that are authored by their participants: real people (for the most part) in unscripted (for the most part) situations.

This is because we no longer think of ourselves as actors working from a script, but as cocreators, responsible for the collective development of our world. The experience of democracy, free markets, free speech, and an interactive media space has made us reluctant to live by decree. Fundamentalism—the notion that our world is completely ordained, and that our job is simply to follow the rules—does not jibe with our newfound experience of collective will.

This doesn't mean that God needn't exist—just that we may be more partnered with the Almighty than we at first presumed. Narrative is not the enemy, as long as we understand that any given narrative is not more important than any other. Thanks to the interconnected nature of the Net, that doesn't mean all narratives are equally obscure, but rather that all narratives are equally vital. We live in a universe where a butterfly's wing-flaps can cause a hurricane halfway around the world, a universe where a couple of loose cannons in the Middle East can create two of the world's most practiced religions. Every time we participate in the ongoing reality creation of the Net, we shape our world in ways we can't begin to understand.

The Internet teaches us to see the value of diversity and plurality. All the opinions of all the people matter. Fundamentalism teaches that there is only one path, one story, and one author. Whether they are attacking the free market, women's rights activists, civil libertarians, or homosexuals, and whether they are using purchased airwaves or hijacked airplanes, such fundamentalists are fighting a losing battle.

For we are the network, and we will include them—which is how we will win. ■

Y-Life **contributing writer Douglas Rushkoff is the author of seven novels, including *Exit Strategy*, serialized at yil.com/exitstrategy.**

What *Does* a Hobbit Look Like?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 113

much for adventures (cue dramatic tension). For a visual reference, check out **The Hobbit Hole [thehobbithole.cjb.net]**.

Q Does that mean Liv Tyler is not a hobbit?

A You're catching on. Lithe Liv plays Arwen, an elven princess. Elves are immortal, approximately human-size, and extraordinarily beautiful. They've been running things throughout the history of Middle-earth, but the era of the elves is ending. When it does, they'll leave for an Atlantis-type land called Valinor. For more info go to **The Grey Havens: Elves [tolkien.cro.net/elves.html]**.

Q Are Tolkien fans worried about this casting choice?

A Tyler's fans cite her beauty, grace, and screen presence as evidence that she'll make a fine princess and female romantic lead. Her opponents cite her filmography, which includes *Armageddon* and *One Night at McCool's,* as evidence that she won't. **The White Council: The Arwen Debate [pub8.ezboard.com/fthelotrmoviesitearwendebate]** will bring you up-to-date on what they're saying.

Q Do all these Middle-earth races speak English?

A Actually, none of them speaks English. But for simplicity's sake (and to sell a book or two), Tolkien graciously translated the main narrative and most of the dialogue into English from the languages he created. Most of Middle-earth, for example, speaks Westron. The elves also speak, um, Elvish. You'll want to go to **The Elvish Linguisitic Fellowship [elvish.org]** for some scholarly insight into Tolkien's "mad hobby" of creating languages.

Q Let me guess: The Internet is lousy with fans of this stuff.

A Yep. For Ring fan fiction, please see the **The Fanfiction Archives [www.tolkien-fanfiction.iwarp.com/ArchiveHomepage.htm]** and **The Tolkien Trail: Rivendell [tolkientrail.com/rivendell]**. Some aren't half bad, actually. For a comic-strip parody, try **The Fraud of the Rings [www.sev.com.au/toonzone/fotr/strip.asp]**.

Q Do Tolkien fans have lives?

A Of course, but some are living them in the years between Bilbo Baggins's farewell party and the War of the Ring. See **Elendor [elendor.net]**, a MUSH, or multi-user simultaneous hallucination.

Q Fine, but why is my cell phone ringing?

A It's capitalism on the line; it'd like a word with your wallet. This summer, KBtoys.com and Amazon.com began taking preorders for Frodo Baggins collector sets and 20-inch swords that glow blue and make cool slashing sounds. Burger King is serving up millions of hamburger meals filled with BK-branded Middle-earth goodness, while **Decipher [decipher.com]** is promoting its *Lord of the Rings* trading cards. And yes, the *LOTR* marketing machine is even targeting cell phone users by offering interactive games and news updates via wireless devices. At press time, the initiative was still in the works, but a New Line Cinema spokesperson explained that new wireless content would continue to become available throughout the movie's run. ■

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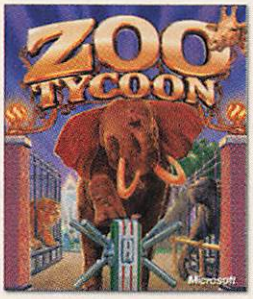

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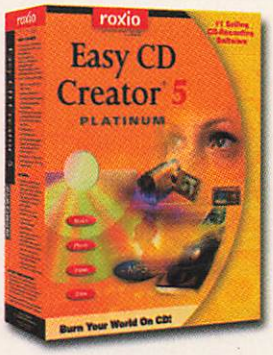

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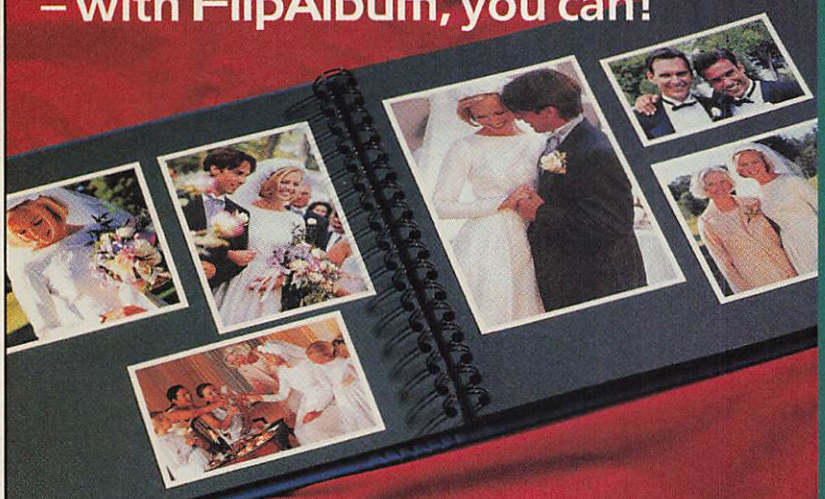

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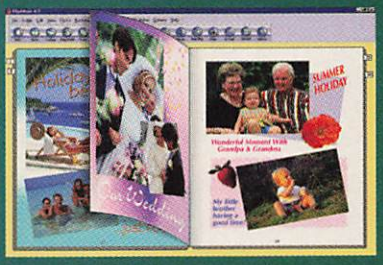

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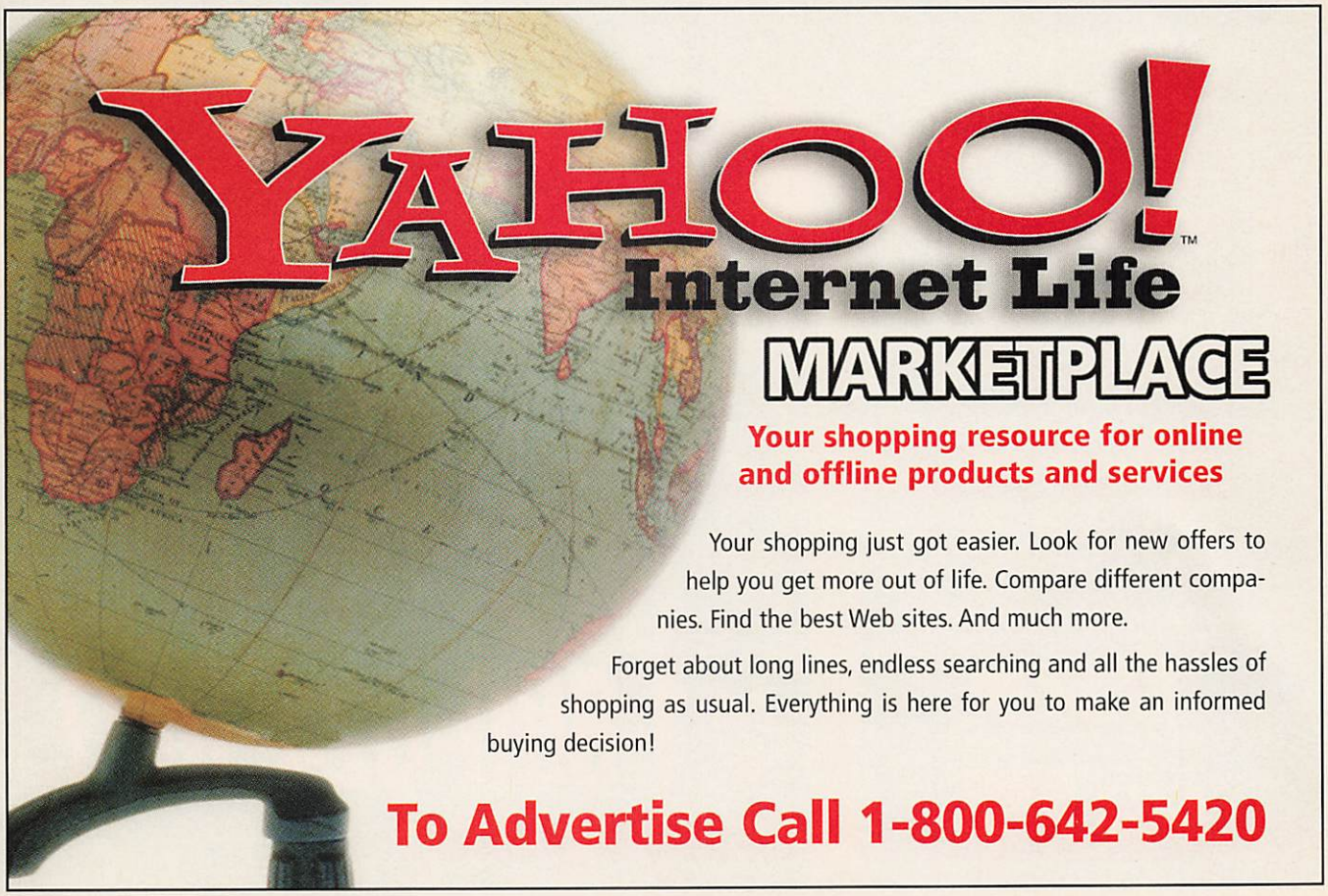

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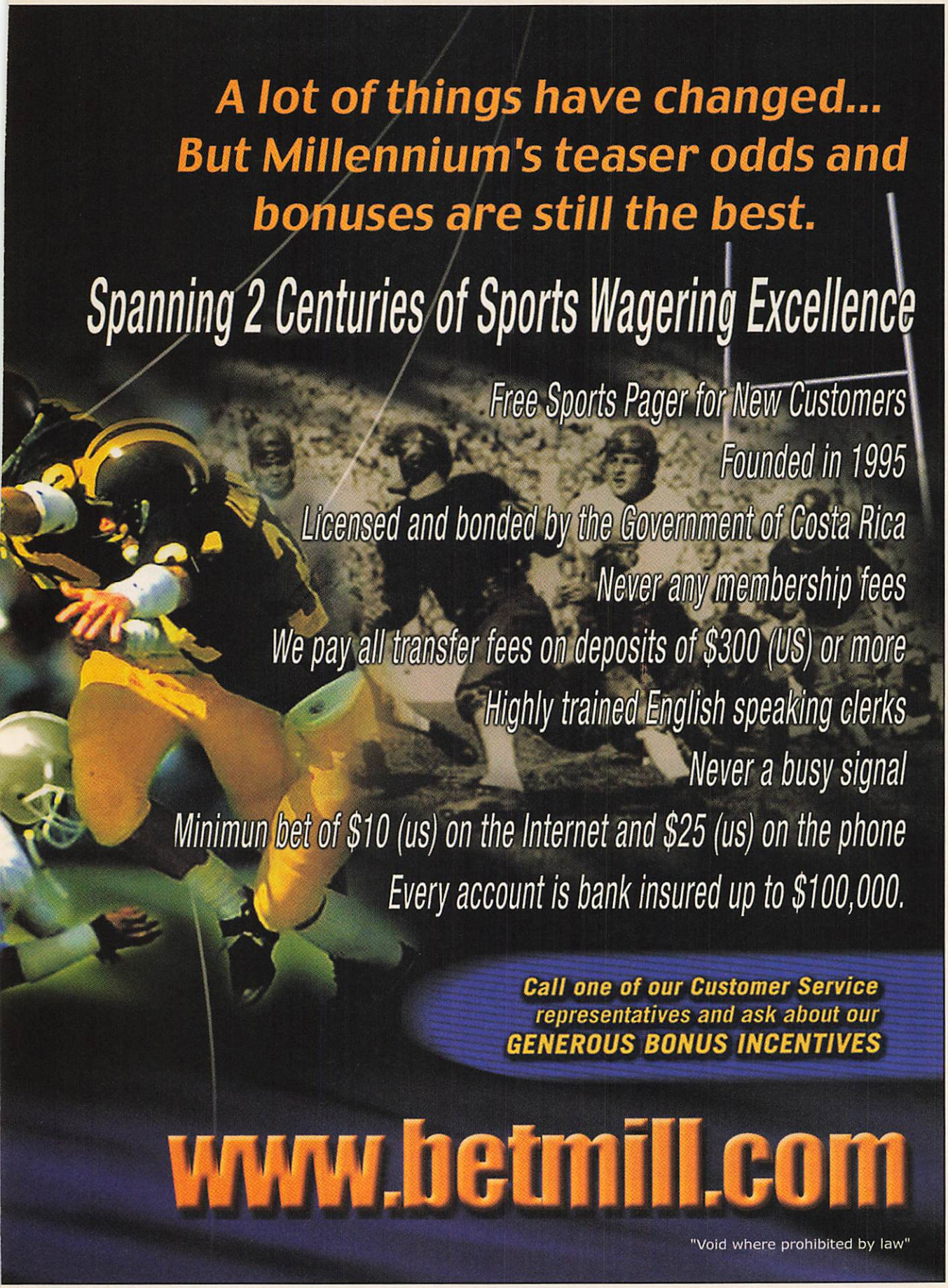
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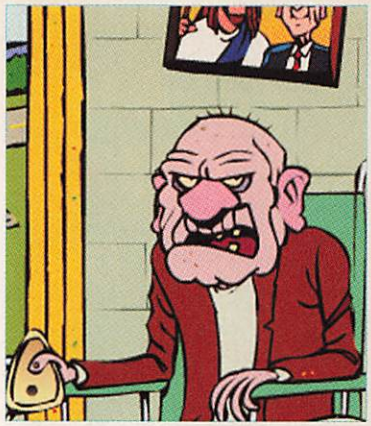

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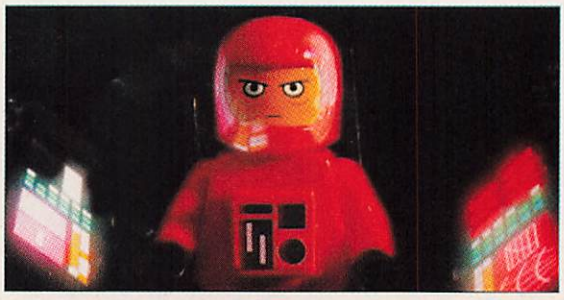

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- HARRY POTTER: HOGWARTS: QUIDDITCH TRAINING | harrypotter.warnerbros.com/game
- GLADIATOR | circusx.com/games/gladiator.html
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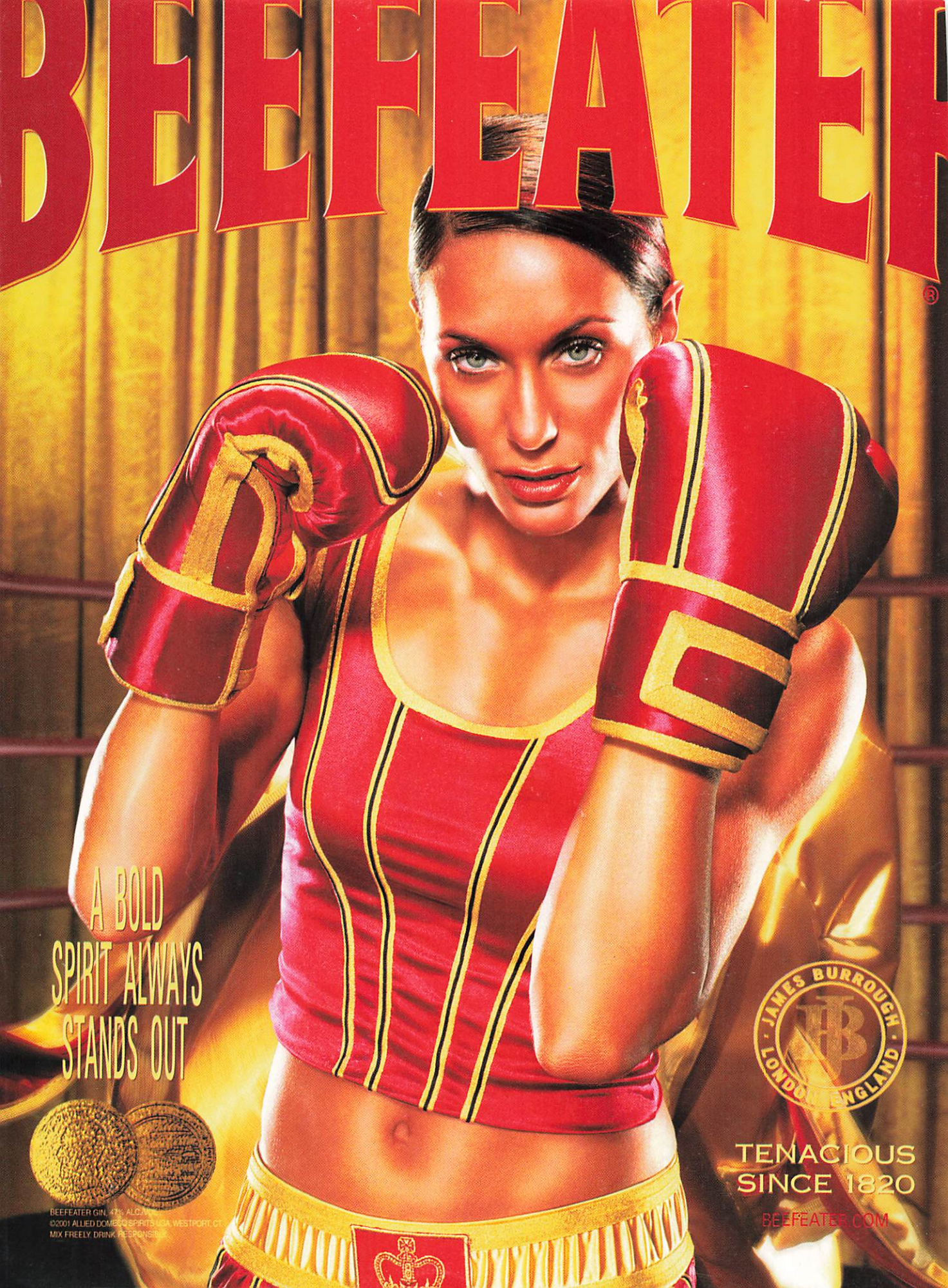
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